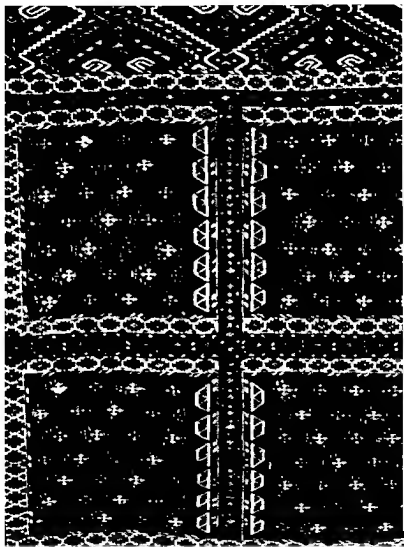


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**BOKHARA, TURKOMAN  
AND AFGHAN RUGS**



BOKHARA, TURKOMAN  
AND AFGHAN RUGS  
BY HARTLEY CLARK    \*    \*

WITH SEVENTEEN PLATES IN COLOUR, EIGHT  
MONOTONE PLATES AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS  
IN BLACK AND WHITE    \*    \*    \*    \*

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LIMITED  
LONDON:                      VIGO STREET W 1

DEDICATED TO  
A. E. P. C.  
IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE  
OF MUTUAL ENDEAVOUR

## PREFACE

### THE ROMANCE OF RUG-COLLECTING

**B**EFORE embarking on a serious study of our subject, I propose, as an encouragement to such of my readers as may be on the threshold of their researches, to expose unblushingly the puerile amateurish nature of my own initial ventures and to relate the history of some of my earlier acquisitions.

If, by so doing, I succeed in guiding even one enthusiast more surely over the course which all beginners must travel and save him from some of the croppers which all novices are apt to take, then I need express no apology for prefacing my work with personal matter that can have little or no interest for more advanced students of the subject.

The true joy of any collection, apart from its intrinsic worth as such, does and should lie in the fact that each specimen in it is a trophy, the result of a careful stalk, as of a stag, secured by the final *coup de grâce* with a minimum expenditure of ammunition. The rich man, who acquires a collection, whether as a whole or by separate pieces, merely by the process of signing cheques is like unto a man who would have a herd of deer coralled for him to destroy with a machine-gun. Such methods are too easy, and defeat their own object by destroying the value

of the prize to its possessor. In collecting, broadly speaking, one's chief weapons must be taste and knowledge rather than money, though a modicum of the latter is practically essential. My own collection, many pieces of which are here illustrated, is one of considerable merit in itself and of even greater merit in the eyes of its collector. Each piece, apart from its own romance of past centuries, has a story which brings to my mind strange scenes, foreign tongues, quaint characters, memories of sacrifices made or of curious bargains, and so on.

My treasures were laboriously acquired, and there has been much weeding out before the final standard of perfection was reached. I started as a subaltern when stationed at a large garrison town near the North-West frontier of India. I was without the necessary weapons for a collector ; that is to say, my taste was undeveloped, my knowledge was *nil*, and my money usually a minus quantity. In the course of time I developed my taste and acquired knowledge, but am free to admit that the final weapon has consistently eluded my grasp, except in meagre proportions.

My first deal took place while I was still, figuratively speaking, unarmed. A crafty Hindu pedlar displayed before my untutored gaze what I imagined were two glorious specimens from the looms of Persia. Petulantly I bade him begone and, I confess it with shame, considerably hastened his departure. Indeed, it was only by rapid foot-work that he escaped personal injury. However, at this stage a sapient Pathan servant prompted me, saying that doubtless the low-born son of an ill-begotten mother would barter the rugs for a selection of old clothes. The pursuit started, and in the course of a few days the hawker was

cajoled back, lured on doubtless by tempting promises of the pick of a well-stocked wardrobe. When the time came for the production of adequate barter, the Pathan produced such a stock of raiment as even I was unaware of possessing and might well feel ashamed of. It was made into a large bundle, was duly scorned by the hawker, was added to in a grudging fashion by the Pathan, and finally was accepted as the price when a pair of old boots was thrown in.

When the rugs were at last mine and I was at liberty to inspect them alone, I could have rolled on them for sheer joy. Indeed, it was not until some weeks after that disillusionment came, and I was forced to recognise the fact that, far from being priceless Persian antiques, they were merely a despicable form of machine-made fabric, resembling a kind of velveteen, that was produced by the acre at a few pence per square yard in German factories! Perhaps these should, but they do not, form part of my cherished collection as now constituted.

It was not till some months later, in a Himalayan hill-station, that I had the heart to try again. Again I tried the same tactics, namely, the barter of what was to me only useless rubbish, old clothing, a sprung tennis racquet, a worn-out cartridge-bag, a broken camera, some discarded polo sticks—in fact, a miscellany of crocks. In exchange I became possessed of three small rugs, real Oriental rugs this time, labelled by their Kashmiri vendor “Turkomani of an age not less than three hundred years.” Later knowledge, of course, proved them to be moderns of the common, dull, uninteresting type woven in their thousands in the south-western districts of Afghanistan.

Having now made a real start, my ambitions soared. I soon



I also learned the price that had been paid, and nearly bit my tongue off.

However, there was nothing to be done. When I got home I began to eye the Kirman rug with suspicion. On closer inspection some of the colours appeared to be wavering in their allegiance to the definite limitations which had originally been assigned to them. Boldly, and with a sense of burning my boats behind me, I folded it up and plunged it bodily into a tub full of water and left it there for the night. In the morning, on entering the bath-room, I imagined for one moment that the wonderful mingled colouring of a Himalayan dawn, entering by the windows, was reflected in all its radiant glory from the bath. Recollection and disillusion arrived simultaneously. Rapture was dispelled.

Gingerly I raised the sodden mass. It was indeed a melting sight. All the colours had melted. It was as though the roses were ramblers. They had spread out of their vases o'er the entire field. They were mingled inextricably with foliage that had assumed a sub-tropical luxuriance. Enough. More in anger than in sorrow I took it back to its sponsor. Was he abashed? No. All good rugs contained a superabundance of dye stuff, rather more than the wool could completely absorb, so that in the course of time the colours should set deep-toned and brilliant, instead of fading to nothingness. Gladly he would take it back, lay it down in his shop to get plenty of usage, and he would undertake to say that before long I should see it not only revive, but become a veritable antique before my eyes.

Ruthlessly I extorted from him that sum of money which I computed to be fair compensation for my dealings. The money

thus obtained formed the basis of my next transaction, and it will be noticed that this was the first expenditure of actual money. I had done three miserable beginner's deals, and had acquired a certain experience without any actual cost. I was by now intelligently interested in the subject and bought a book on rugs, which I diligently studied, whilst I also took every opportunity of inspecting the stocks of pedlars and shopkeepers, trying to classify and appraise the wares I saw. Although the book was a rotten one, full of claptrap and mis-statements, it none the less supplied me with a rudimentary knowledge and was a stepping-stone to higher things. I have since read a vast number of books on the subject and have found few that are not vague, if not actually misleading.

However, to my next venture. In a certain bazaar I wot of, there was a rapacious Indian rug-merchant, a disciple of Mohammed, of whom I scarcely think the Prophet would be proud. Armed with somewhat improved taste, a real smattering of knowledge and the sum of money which was the sole product of my previous ventures, I started forth to overhaul his stock, having already in mind a Persian rug from the province of Khorassan, which I had previously marked down with a covetous eye.

There was but little pursuit in this case, excepting for those deviations from the path of perfect candour which are a necessary evil in attempting to bargain with Orientals of this class. The said merchant eventually allowed me to bear off my choice at a price not very much in excess of its value, in the hope that he would thereby induce me to come again and be properly swindled.

The rug was a genuine old piece of pleasing mellow tones,

and gave me great pleasure and instruction in trying to decipher the symbols of its design and in minute examination of its weave. One serious fault it had which in due course I had to recognise was ineradicable. Owing to faulty weaving it would not lie flat, and in consequence it showed signs of serious wear along certain definite lines, and was bound with any hard wear to split and suffer damage.

This determined me to part with it when occasion offered and to fly a little higher in my next experiment. By now I was getting a little hard to please, my knowledge had increased by leaps and bounds, and I made up my mind that my next effort should get me a rug fit to form the basis of a valuable collection.

The opportunity shortly occurred when a Peshawari presented himself with a very mixed bale of about fifty rugs on a hand-trolley. Amongst the lot I soon saw there was not a rug worth having, but there was a fine old pair of Tekke Turkoman camel-bags. Strangely enough, this old Peshawari did me a square deal almost right away. His price was full but not extortionate, and he admitted without demur that my Khorassan rug was of as good a standard as the camel-bags and accepted it in half payment for the pair. On this occasion we parted friends, though in a subsequent deal he successfully swindled me over a Persian loom shawl and I had the greatest difficulty in recovering from my mistake by resorting to the quite illegal, but in this case effective, method of beguiling from him a very fine Tekke Turkoman tent band and retaining it as a hostage until he consented to disgorge his previously ill-gotten gains.

It was about at this stage that I realised the necessity for confining myself to some particular group of Oriental rugs. Not to

do so meant an almost limitless field, an ocean in which the millionaire might drown, a veritable Sahara of which no one man could exhaust the exploration. Moreover, even if one were financially able to make a really representative collection of specimens of each and every type and period of Oriental rugs, one could not conceivably find space in which to display and preserve them. It would need many times the accommodation necessary for, say, a full conference of the League of Nations.

One other decision I took, one that too often is only taken by collectors when it is too late, and that was to aim only at the superfine. They alone are a joy for ever and worth the collecting. I determined to quit once and for all the ruck of mediocre and even good carpets, not to touch them even at bargain prices, but to concentrate on acquiring slowly but surely the finest obtainable examples of the types constituting the group in which I was going to specialise. Opportunity and taste alike determined that this should be the Central Asian group. In the course of years I acquired in turn magnificent specimens of Salor, Saryk, Tekke, Yomut, Ersari, and Afghan Turkoman rugs.

A categorical recital of the pursuit and capture of each prize would certainly be a soporific, but, lest any of my readers suffer from insomnia, I will relate in brief the story of one of my best captures. It was a Saryk Turkoman rug of the early 18th century, nearly square in shape and of wonderful colouring, excellent condition, fine material and first-rate workmanship, that lay for a time with a very large price on its head in the inner sanctuary of one of the largest rug-merchants in Peshawar City.

As occasionally happened in those parts, certain merry-makers from across the Border organised a raid on the city, which they

looted pretty effectually, the Saryk Turkoman rug forming part of the "swag." Much of the loot was recovered, but the rug was ruthlessly cut into three or four pieces for facility of carriage, and eventually was so smuggled up to Kashmir in the bedding of an accomplice.

There it remained, an unsaleable asset, for seven years. Quite by chance I got to hear of it through my acquaintance with a secret agent of the Amir of Afghanistan, a decent old rogue who knew all the secrets and undercurrents of Northern India from A to Z and backwards. This most interesting man, albeit he lived in squalor in the heart of a native city, ostensibly carrying on a trade in furs, was a man of considerable substance, who wielded *sub rosa* an almost uncanny power by virtue of controlling, like some great spider, the numerous threads of a vast web of intrigue that responded to his lightest touch. He volunteered one day, after many cups of green tea had staved off the huskiness which Kabuli tobacco and much discussion in the Pushtu tongue were wont to produce in me, to get me the pieces of a magnificent carpet at a give-away price. He baulked my curiosity with skill, so that I was unaware that its present owner was in unlawful possession and would take any price, since no legitimate market was open to him.

In due course the rug arrived, in pieces and in an incredibly filthy state, and would have been rejected as rubbish even by a rag-merchant. It was handed over to me for five pounds, and I thrilled with joy over the foul tatters. In triumph and in ignorance of its history I bore it off to be repaired and cleaned by the very merchant from whom it had been looted those long years back. The rug-merchant then told me the whole history, but

would make no claim to the rug since I had acquired it in good faith, and also, I suspect, because he, like so many Peshawris, stood in awe of the Amir's agent, whose name I had breathed. On the contrary, he took great pride in seeing to it that it was cleaned and repaired by the most skilled hands in India, with the result that for a further ten pounds I had the rug restored to me in a condition almost equal to that of seven years previously before the raid.

It is hoped that these few anecdotes from my own experience will serve to show from what puny beginnings a fine collection will grow.

If an untutored pen has failed to show the romantic fascination of the hobby, let that omission be ascribed to its true source, let it not lead to any suspicion that romance is lacking.

Finally, in presenting to the public this work, which confines itself to one particular group of rugs, I would emphasise that it is only by limiting its scope and by specialising that it is possible to produce a book more informative on its particular theme than one which deals in a necessarily superficial manner with every branch of a vast subject. In suggesting the analogy of a comparison between a specialist and a general practitioner, I lay myself open to the accusation of undue egoism, whereas in truth it is with due humility, in the full consciousness of its shortcomings, that I am bold enough to assert that this volume is an advance on any previous publication of its kind in the English language.

HARTLEY CLARK.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS monograph deals mainly with the carpets and rugs made by the Turkoman tribes of Central Asia and adjacent nationalities. Its object is to clear up many misconceptions which exist in respect of these fabrics and to introduce a better nomenclature than the meaningless or erroneous trade names by which these rugs are at present known.

This group of rugs is of necessity given but scant attention in the many existing books which deal with the whole range of Oriental carpets, and yet it is, in a way, the most interesting group, in that these nomad tribes have been practically the last of the rug-making peoples to be touched by Western civilisation. Indeed, amongst the plethora of books on Oriental rugs, I have failed to find any in the English language which contains full and accurate information about this group.

The text has purposely been reduced to a minimum which, it is hoped, contains the maximum of useful information, whilst excluding the superfluous mass of "padding" so often found in books on rugs. On the other hand, no trouble nor expense has been spared to obtain the very best coloured reproductions of a quantity of antique examples, and more knowledge can be gained from a study of these plates than from a mass of detail in the text.

Furthermore, the fine examples chosen for illustration are all pieces of the kind that *can still be obtained* by discriminating collectors, and are not pieces of international importance such as only exist in big museums or in the collections of the very rich.

Such information has been included as might prove of real practical value to the amateur collector in selecting, examining, testing and classifying his specimens or his prospective acquisitions.

It has been impossible, without greatly enlarging the scope of this work, to classify, describe and illustrate all the many varieties of rugs woven by all the sub-sections of the different tribes. It must suffice to have shown the main types, and to leave the intelligent reader to discern for himself the various sub-types and hybrids which he will doubtless come across.

It is only within the last four decades, since the Russian Empire absorbed Transcaspia and constructed the Central Asian railway, that the tribes have, more or less, ceased to be savages. The rugs of greatest interest are, of course, those woven by the nomads in their untrammelled state.

Throughout the ages they have maintained the purity of their designs with faithful consistency, and it is only recently that they have fallen to the lure of cheap chemical dyes. These rugs make a somewhat different appeal from the masterpieces of Persia, which excel in delicacy and elegance of design, in artistic blending of colours and in softness of tones. The Turkoman fabrics reflect the wild savagery and withal the simplicity of the warlike tribes who make them. Blood red is their staple colour, just as bloodshed is, or was, an almost monotonous routine in the



lives of these nomads. Their rugs used to be woven exclusively by the women and girls, never for sale, but as furniture for their tent dwellings, as gifts to their chiefs or as a dowry for the girl to take with her on her marriage.

It must be remembered that carpets and rugs served these people in lieu of tables, chairs, mattresses, pillows and as *portières* and places of prayer; in the shape of *jowals* and *torbas* they took the place of boxes, portmanteaux, and cupboards. What wonder, then, that they made them with patient care, of a texture to withstand the hardest wear, and of colours and designs that were an expression of their feelings and a cheer to their homes.

The great and increasing demand in Western markets for Oriental rugs and carpets has tended to send prices up and quality down. The encroachments of civilisation, the introduction of chemical dyes, hasty and careless production for the market, and the eradication of individuality, are the principal causes of the marked deterioration in quality. The old hereditary dye-makers, whose profession used to be one of considerable importance and whose secrets were jealously guarded, can no longer compete with the easily made, easily matched, cheap chemical dyes; indeed, the art of producing some of the famous old animal and vegetable dyes is now lost.

Labour is yearly becoming more expensive, and it is safe to predict that never again will rugs be produced to bear comparison with the works of old. The rugs made now are dead in feeling as in colour, though for the most part the Turkomans still maintain faithfully the old designs; the quality of workmanship and of material is vastly poorer. Happily, it is still possible to pick up here and there a fine example of the work of former

days; they last for generations, increasing in beauty with age, and, incidentally, now that they are appreciated, they increase also in value. Almost any Turkoman rug which is more than fifty years old is pleasing and of interest; very few pieces exist that are over 200 years old, and those that do exist are of wonderful beauty and of great value. The reason for this scarcity of really antique Turkoman rugs is that all Turkoman rugs were woven for home use, and were not, like the Persian masterpieces which are known to be upwards of 400 years old, preserved in mosques and palaces, for the simple reason that these nomads had no abode more stable than a tent.

Recent occurrences in Central Asia, both during and since the Great War, have again thrown the whole of Transcaspia into a state of chaos. There has been endless looting by Bolsheviks, Afghans and Turkomans, and it is tolerably certain that from this time on there can be very few of the really antique carpets left in the country.

I desire to acknowledge the courtesy of the Editor of *The Connoisseur* for permission to reprint the colour plates and line drawings which were published<sup>1</sup> in that magazine, and I am indebted to him for his kindly assistance throughout.

The excellence of the coloured plates and other illustrations is due to the efforts of Messrs. Vitty and Seaborne, of Crane Court, Fleet Street, E.C., Messrs. Knighton and Cutts, of Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, E.C., and Messrs. George Pulman, of Thayer Street, Manchester Square, W.

My thanks are also due to Messrs. Vincent Robinson,

<sup>1</sup> The articles which appeared in *The Connoisseur* with these plates have here been completely re-arranged and added to

Oriental Carpet Merchants, of 34 Wigmore Street, for their interest and assistance in many ways.

The two outstanding works of reference used were General Bogoliouboff's *Tapis de l'Asie Centrale*, and *The Encyclopædia Britannica* (for certain historical information, the corroboration of dates, etc.).

Other works referred to include Khanikoff's *Bokhara*, Wolff's *Mission to Bokhara*, 1843-45, Arminius Vambéry's *Travels in Central Asia*, O'Donovan's *The Merv Oasis*, Col. A. le Messurier's *From London to Bokhara*, Walter A. Hawley's *Oriental Rugs*, and John Kimberly Mumford's *Oriental Rugs*.

# CONTENTS

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| PREFACE . . . . .   | vii  |
| INTRODUCTION . . . . .  | xvii |
| TURKOMAN HISTORY . . . . .  | 29   |
| TURKOMAN ETHNOGRAPHY . . . . .  | 33   |
| THE POINTS OF A RUG . . . . .   | 36   |
| ORIGIN OF CARPET WEAVING . . . . .  | 46   |
| <i>PROCESS OF WEAVING AND MATERIALS</i> . . . . .                                       | 48   |
| SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TURKOMAN RUGS                                 | 56   |
| DESIGN . . . . .  | 58   |
| GENERAL REMARKS ON NOMENCLATURE . . . . .   | 66   |
| BOKHARA AND ITS PEOPLE . . . . .  | 68   |
| BOKHARA CARPETS . . . . .   | 73   |
| TURKOMAN RUGS . . . . .   | 76   |
| (i) General Remarks . . . . .   | 76   |
| (ii) The Ersari Turkomans . . . . .   | 78   |
| (iii) Afghan Turkomans . . . . .  | 82   |
| (iv) The so-called Merv or Punjdeh Group—<br>Salor, Saryk and Tekke Turkomans . . . . . | 86   |
| (v) The Yomut Turkomans and Kindred Tribes . . . . .                                    | 97   |
| (vi) The South-Western Afghanistan Group . . . . .                                      | 104  |
| (vii) Minor Fabrics of the Turkomans . . . . .  | 108  |
| (viii) Prayer Rugs . . . . .  | 114  |
| TWO SOUTHERN PERSIAN RUGS . . . . .   | 122  |
| INDEX . . . . .   | 127  |

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## *In Colour*

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| *AN YOMUT TURKOMAN PORTIÈRE . . . . .          | (Frontispiece) |
|  | FACING PAGE    |
| A BOKHARA CARPET . . . . .                     | 74             |
| AN ERSARI TURKOMAN CARPET . . . . .            | 80             |
| AN AFGHAN TURKOMAN CARPET OR FIL-PA . . . . .  | 84             |
| A SARYK TURKOMAN RUG . . . . .                 | 90             |
| *A SALOR TURKOMAN RUG . . . . .                | 90             |
| *A TEKKE TURKOMAN RUG . . . . .                | 94             |
| A TEKKE TURKOMAN RUG . . . . .                 | 94             |
| AN YOMUT TURKOMAN CARPET . . . . .             | 98             |
| AN ADRASKAND CARPET . . . . .                  | 106            |
| AN YOMUT (CHAUDOR SUBDIVISION) TORBA . . . . . | 110            |
| AN ERSARI KHARJIN . . . . .                    | 110            |
| *AN ERSARI JOWAL . . . . .                     | 110            |
| *A BOKHARA PRAYER RUG . . . . .                | 114            |
| *A SARYK TURKOMAN PRAYER RUG . . . . .         | 114            |
| *A SHIRAZ (PERSIAN) RUG . . . . .              | 124            |
| *A NIRIS (PERSIAN) RUG . . . . .               | 124            |

\* These rugs have been on exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

## xxvi LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

*In Monstone*

|   | FACING PAGE |
|---|-------------|
| PART OF AN ERSARI TURKOMAN RUG OF AFGHAN TURKOMAN TYPE  | 82          |
| PART OF AN ERSARI TURKOMAN RUG FROM THE BESHIR DISTRICT | 82          |
| AN YOMUT TURKOMAN RUG . . . . .                         | 100         |
| HALF OF A SARYK TURKOMAN DOORWAY ORNAMENT . . . . .     | 112         |
| PART OF A TEKKE TURKOMAN TENT-BAND OR DAUR-I-KHIRGAH .  | 112         |
| A PRAYER RUG OF THE AKHAL TEKKE TURKOMANS . . . . .     | 116         |
| AN ERSARI TURKOMAN PRAYER RUG FROM THE BESHIR DISTRICT  | 118         |
| A PRAYER RUG OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN AFGHAN GROUP .        | 120         |

*Line Drawings*

|  |    |
|--|----|
| MAP OF THE TURKOMAN COUNTRY SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF TRIBES . . . . .   | 34 |
| PLAN AND SECTION OF TURKISH (OR GHIOROES) KNOT . . . . .   | 50 |
| PLAN AND SECTION OF PERSIAN (OR SEHNA) KNOT . . . . .  | 50 |
| TWENTY-TWO COMMON MINOR DESIGNS OF THE TURKOMANS, INCLUDING OCTAGONAL DISC, CONE, SEAL OF SOLOMON, COMB, TREES OF LIFE, FISH, SCORPION, DOG, AND OTHER SYMBOLIC AND CONVENTIONAL FIGURES . . . . . | 60 |
| SIX FIELD DESIGNS OR GULS OF THE AFGHAN TURKOMANS AND THE ERSARI TURKOMANS . . . . .   | 62 |
| NINE FIELD DESIGNS OR GULS OF THE TEKKE, SALOR AND SARYK TURKOMANS AND OF BOKHARANS . . . . .  | 64 |
| SIX FIELD DESIGNS OF GULS OF THE YOMUT TURKOMANS AND OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN AFGHANISTAN GROUP . . . . .  | 64 |

# BOKHARA, TURKOMAN AND AFGHAN RUGS

*In Monotone*

|   | FACING PAGE |
|---|-------------|
| PART OF AN ERSARI TURKOMAN RUG OF AFGHAN TURKOMAN TYPE  | 82          |
| PART OF AN ERSARI TURKOMAN RUG FROM THE BESHIR DISTRICT | 82          |
| AN YOMUT TURKOMAN RUG . . . . .                         | 100         |
| HALF OF A SARYK TURKOMAN DOORWAY ORNAMENT . . . . .     | 112         |
| PART OF A TEKKE TURKOMAN TENT-BAND OR DAUR-I-KHIRGAH .  | 112         |
| A PRAYER RUG OF THE AKHAL TEKKE TURKOMANS . . . . .     | 116         |
| AN ERSARI TURKOMAN PRAYER RUG FROM THE BESHIR DISTRICT  | 118         |
| A PRAYER RUG OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN AFGHAN GROUP . . . .  | 120         |

*Line Drawings*

|  |    |
|--|----|
| MAP OF THE TURKOMAN COUNTRY SHOWING APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF TRIBES . . . . .   | 34 |
| PLAN AND SECTION OF TURKISH (OR GHIORDES) KNOT . . . . .   | 50 |
| PLAN AND SECTION OF PERSIAN (OR SEHNA) KNOT . . . . .  | 50 |
| TWENTY-TWO COMMON MINOR DESIGNS OF THE TURKOMANS, INCLUDING OCTAGONAL DISC, CONE, SEAL OF SOLOMON, COMB, TREES OF LIFE, FISH, SCORPION, DOG, AND OTHER SYMBOLIC AND CONVENTIONAL FIGURES . . . . . | 60 |
| SIX FIELD DESIGNS OR GULS OF THE AFGHAN TURKOMANS AND THE ERSARI TURKOMANS . . . . .   | 62 |
| NINE FIELD DESIGNS OR GULS OF THE TEKKE, SALOR AND SARYK TURKOMANS AND OF BOKHARANS . . . . .  | 64 |
| SIX FIELD DESIGNS OF GULS OF THE YOMUT TURKOMANS AND OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN AFGHANISTAN GROUP . . . . .  | 64 |



BOKHARA, TURKOMAN  
AND AFGHAN RUGS

## TURKOMAN HISTORY

**I**N view of the paucity of written data and the unreliability of oral traditions and legends it is no easy matter to arrive at the past history of the Turkomans, who are a people without literature, whose legends suffer from exaggeration and mythology, and who have a super-Oriental vagueness on the subject of dates and other figures.

Of oral traditions practically none is credible that relates to any earlier period than the 18th century. Of manuscript sources of information the only outstanding example is the Khejere-iterkime, or "Genealogy of the Turkomans," composed in the middle of the 17th century by Abdul Ghazi Bahadur Khan, the Khan of Khiva.

The following paragraphs give a précis of the Turkoman history as set forth in the work *Tapis de l'Asie Centrale*, by General André Bogoliouboff, published at Petrograd in 1908-1909. In 1900 General Bogoliouboff, then Commander-in-Chief of the Province of Transcaspia, with headquarters at Askhabad, directed Captain F. Michailoff to compose his brochure, entitled "The Indigenes of the Transcaspian Province and their Life," to accompany an ethnographical map of this region drawn for the Paris Exhibition by the employés of the Russian Administration.

Captain Michailoff's brochure was based largely upon the above-mentioned "Genealogy of the Turkomans," and upon the

traditions and legends of peoples of whom he had an intimate knowledge, and therefore, since General Bogoliouboff's work is now somewhat rare and only within the reach of the very few, the following translated synopsis of his statements should prove of interest and assistance to those who have not access to the original

(NOTE — This synopsis is not a literal translation, but is merely an accumulation put in consecutive order of statements found in different portions of the book.)

Of all the Turkoman tribes of the present day in Transcaspia the Salors are undoubtedly the most ancient. Indeed, according to their traditions and legends, they are descended from Salor, son of Tag Khan and grandson of Ogouz Khan, a demi-mythological hero supposed to date back somewhere almost to the dawn of time, some 6000 years before Christ.

They maintain that in those times Turkomans inhabited the country far north east round Lake Issi-Koul. Be that as it may, it is certain that in the 6th century there were Turkomans in the province of Syr Daria, and they migrated in the 10th century to the south bank of the Oxus river and to the Merv oasis.

The present Turkoman country belonged first to the Persians under Darius Hystaspes, and subsequently, after the advent of Mohammedanism, to the Arab dynasty of the Abassids and to other Arab dynasties up to the 10th century. At the time when the dynasty of the Abassids was in power at Merv the Salor Turkomans, having been driven out of their original positions by another Turkoman tribe called Bedjnes, migrated southwards under their chief Enekecha to the river Oxus and to Merv. It was towards the end of the 10th century that Turkomans, descended from Salor Karan a son of Enekecha, began to form themselves into the tribes of Yomuts, Tekkes and Saryks.

In the 11th century, about 1036 A.D., the Turco-Turkoman

dynasty of the Seldjoucides (Seljuks) established itself in Margiana, the ancient Merv, which at this period reached its summit of prosperity, but soon afterwards fell, first before the Gounes and later the Mongols (13th to 16th centuries), who in turn gave place to the Persian dynasty of the Sephevides (*sic*).<sup>1</sup>

In 1637 there were Turkomans at Tejend, Bamy and Bejurma and on the Atrak and the Gorghen rivers.

In 1739 Nadir Shah, King of Persia, conquered Khiva, and ordered its Tekke and Yomut subjects to settle in Khorassan. The remainder of the Turkomans remained in the north, wandering about Mangishlak and the Oxus river, and towards the close of the 18th century they were a perfect plague to the Khivans, who had constantly to organise expeditions for their subjugation.

After the settlement of the Turkomans (Yomut and Tekke of Salor descent) in Khorassan, Irak and Fars, a gallant leader called Salor Ogourdjik made his appearance. Collecting a following of about 1000 families, he led them forth, and after many wanderings via the Crimea, the Volga river and the Ural country, the residue of his following eventually arrived in Mangishlak and about Aboul Khan (the Greater and Lesser Balkan mountains near Krasnovodsk). A number of minor tribes, both in and out of Transcaspia, claim descent from Ogourdjik.

After Nadir Shah's death in 1747 Bokhara took possession of Merv, sacked it and deported the inhabitants to Bokhara.<sup>2</sup>

During the 17th and 18th centuries the Persians and Khivans were the deadliest enemies of the Turkomans in Transcaspia. In fact, even up to the latter part of the 19th century, when the Russians definitely subjugated them, the Turkomans existed in a continual state of warring, pillage and robbery in Khivan, Persian and Bokharan territory as they wandered in search of suitable terrain and of water.

In the latter half of the 18th century the Salors inhabited the

<sup>1</sup> The Safawid dynasty of Persia was founded by Ismail Khan, who in 1510 expelled from Merv the Usbeks, who had been in possession since 1505.

<sup>2</sup> Merv was captured by Bokhara in 1787, and seven years later the Bokharans broke the dams and razed the city to the ground.

oases of Yulatan and Punjdeh, but, owing to the hostility and oppression of the Saryks the majority left in 1780<sup>1</sup> for the Herirud and Sarakhs.

Regarding the above it must be borne in mind that the information therein contained emanates principally from native Oriental sources, and, though it has doubtless been sifted and its accuracy largely confirmed, it must be accepted with a certain reserve. It should be remembered, too, that in cases of this kind, dealing with the unwritten history of migratory Oriental tribes, the most glaring discrepancies between the dates given by different historians could frequently be reconciled, were the whole truth known. For instance, two legends from different sources might ascribe totally different dates to the sojourns or movements of a certain tribe. Each legend might be approximately correct in so far as each referred to a *portion* only of the tribe, deeming that portion either the whole or at least the major part of the tribe.

<sup>1</sup> This may be correct as regards a proportion of the Salor tribe, but the majority did not migrate to Persian territory at Zarabad and Sarakhs until about 1856-57, after eviction by the Tekkes.

## TURKOMAN ETHNOGRAPHY

**T**HE Turkomans of Transcaspia may conveniently be divided into the following six principal groups: (1) Salor, (2) Saryk, (3) Tekke, (4) Yomut, (5) Ersari, (6) Afghan Turkoman.<sup>1</sup>

There are also Turkoman tribes in Turkey, Asia Minor and Persia, but these are outside the scope of this work.

The above groups are located approximately as follows, and as shown on the sketch map:—

*Salors*.—Principally at Sarakhs and Maruchak. Minor portions of the tribe are, however, found amongst the Tekkes of the Merv district and amongst the Ersaris.

*Saryks*.—Yulatan and Punjdch on the Murghab River.

*Tekkes*.—In two main divisions: (a) the Akhal Tekkes from about Kizil Arvat to Askhabad, (b) the Merv Tekkes in the oases of Tejend and Merv.

*Yomuts*.—In two main divisions: (a) the Northern Group, including Yomuts proper, Chandors, Ikdyrs and Abdals, in the

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the fabrics of these six main groups, certain rugs woven in the neighbouring countries of Bokhara and Afghanistan are here considered, since each in its own fashion shows close relationship with the Turkoman weaves.

The rugs of districts further east than Bokhara, such as those of Samarkand, Kashgar, Andijan, etc., also come under a different category and are not included.

An article on two specimen rugs of Southern Persia, *i. e.* Shiraz and Niris, has been inserted for the sake of general interest, and not because there is any connection between these rugs and those of the Turkomans.

country north of the line Krasnovodsk-Khiva as far as the Mangishlak district,<sup>1</sup> (b) the Southern Group, including Yomuts proper, Ogourdjalis, and Goklans, in the country south of Krasnovodsk as far as the Gorghen and Atrak rivers

*Ersaris*—Along the Oxus river from Charjui to about Kızıl Ayak, south-east of Karkı, including the villages of Chakır (there are three villages of this name in the Ersarı country), Bourdalık, Beshır, Khoja Salih and Kızıl Ayak, all of which are centres of the weaving industry

There is a minor detachment of Ersaris also in the province of Khiva, north-west of the capital

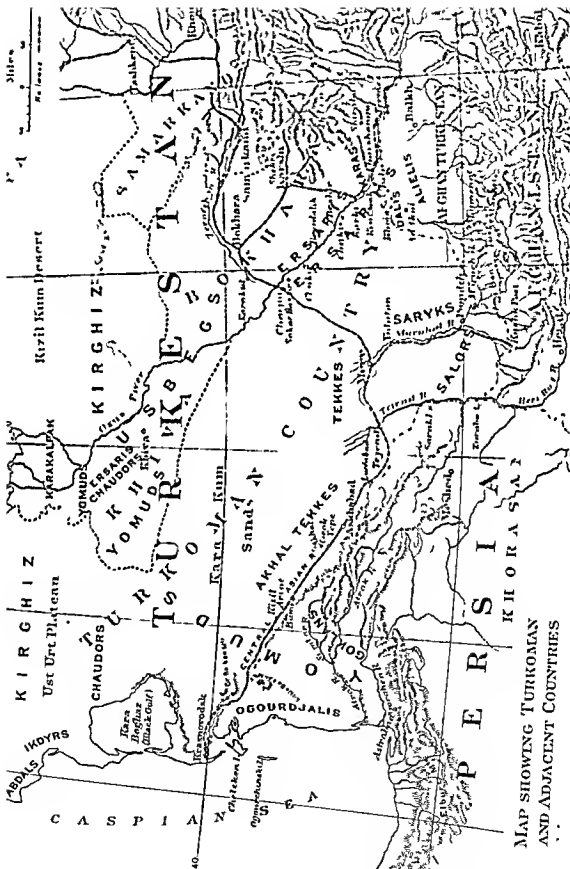
*Afghan Turkomans*—This is a somewhat elastic term, which includes practically all the rug-making peoples in the area north of the line Maimena-Balkh as far as the river Oxus up to the Ersarı country at Kızıl Ayak. In it are included certain Kara Turkomans about Kilif and Charshangu, the Dalis and Alielis about Andkhui, and numerous minor Afghan Turkoman tribes

*South Western Afghan group*—May be considered for the purpose of this work as embracing the districts of Herat, Adraskand, Sabzwar, and in general the area as far east as Kandahar and as far south as Beluchistan

*Bokharan group*—The province of Bokhara (The Sarts and Tadjiks of Bokhara and Samarkand provinces do not make rugs, the rug-making peoples being principally Turkomans settled in the province and certain *Khirghiz* who have acquired the art from the Turkomans)

Apart from the purely Turkoman tribes, there are the follow-

<sup>1</sup> The Karakalpaks (Black bonnets), south of the Aral Sea, and certain *Khirghiz* in the province of Khiva, also weave carpets, but not original types.



MAP SHOWING TURKOMAN  
AND ADJACENT COUNTRIES



ing divisions which merit notice from an ethnographical point of view.

1. Turkomanised tribes of Arab origin, who, whilst dwelling amongst the Turkomans, do not intermarry with them. They consider themselves the true descendants of the Prophet. Their principal subdivisions are : Chiks, Seids, Khodjas, and Atas.

2. Pure Turk tribes, the majority of whom probably inhabited the country before the advent of the Turkomans in the 10th century. They live in mud huts and differ from the Turkomans in many other of their modes of living. The principal are Nouchourlis, Mourtchalis, Anaoulis, Mechinlis, Karadachlis, and Imrelis.

These Arab and Turk tribes do not make carpets.

The whole of the pure Turkoman tribes are nomads or demi-nomads, except the Yomut subdivision of Ogourdjalıs, who, inhabiting houses, not tents, may be considered sedentary.

Quite apart from their tribal classifications, the Turkomans are also divided into two categories : (a) a minor proportion of pure blood called Igues, distinguishable by their broader faces, short noses, and sparse beards ; (b) the major part of mixed blood called Kouls, who are more Aryan in type and grow heavier beards. It is not possible, however, to divide the Igues from the Kouls by any tribal or other division.

## THE POINTS OF A RUG

**T**HE points of a rug, on the combination of which depends its value, are as follows :—

1. Colouring.
2. Design and drawing.
3. Rarity of type.
4. Age.
5. Condition.
6. Fineness of texture.

The order of importance of these points is a matter for the taste or requirements of the individual.

It is obvious that they are to a great extent interdependent, *i.e.* Colouring and Age, Age and Condition, Design and Fineness of texture, and so on.

*Colouring.*—The Orient has always been noted for the splendour of its colours. Oriental rugs express in the highest-degree all the sensuous luxury of peoples to whom the appreciation of colour is an instinct.

Antique Turkoman fabrics have been called the Rembrandts of the East. With their rich perfection of colour, mellowed by age, of which the beauty is increased by the lustre of the material on which it is displayed, they are veritable works of art. The effect of changing lights, the sheen over the many tones of colour, make these old masterpieces from rude nomad looms a delight to the eye of the colourist.

Dyes may be divided into two main categories:—

(a) Chemical or synthetic.

(b) Vegetable or natural, amongst which are included a few animal dyes made from certain insects, shell-fish, sheep's blood, etc.

Chemical dyes are a comparatively recent invention; they were introduced about 1860, but the Turkomans were practically free from them until about forty years ago. Since the Russian occupation of the Turkoman country chemical dyes seem to have found their way into that country in considerable quantities, to the great detriment of the rugs made in recent years.

Chemical dyes will either merge into one another if the carpet gets wet, or they will fade under the influence of light and time. Often, owing to the fading of one or more of the colour-matters composing a chemical dye, the final colour after a few years, or even months, will be ugly and out of harmony with the surrounding colours. Nearly always chemical dyes take the life and wear out of the wool by eating away the natural grease and rendering the wool harsh and brittle.

Chemical dyes do not mellow and grow soft under the influence of light and time. Rugs made with these dyes are not antiques, and are not fit to be put in the same class as those made with vegetable dyes; cheapness is their one recommendation, but in reality they are dear at any price.

*Vegetable dyes* are, or were, one of the special glories of the East. Their production was a fine art brought to perfection, the secret of which was often jealously guarded and handed down from father to son. The art is gradually dying out owing to the competition of chemical substitutes, and the modern vegetable dyes are vastly inferior to those of old both in intensity and in

lasting qualities ; time merely fades them on the surface without enriching them.

Reds were the special forte of the Turkomans, just as yellow was that of the Chinese, and blue that of the Persians.

The lustrous sheen and imperishable colour of the antiques is due to the perfection of knowledge of these simple nomads in the extraction of the dyes from the various plants, leaves, barks, roots, fruits, insects, etc., and in their proper treatment and application to the yarn.

#### THE PRINCIPAL DYES AND MORDANTS.

*Reds* are obtained from madder root (Ruyan, as it is called) and also from the female of the cochineal insect (Kermes).

*Blues* are made from indigo.

*Yellows* are obtained from various berries, leaves, and barks ; turmeric, henna, and gall-nuts are used to produce respectively orange, red-browns, and greys.

*Greens* are only obtained by mixing blues and yellows ; there is no natural green dye used.

*Black* is, as a rule, made from iron pyrites and corrodes the wool ; in time the black portions of a rug will for this reason be found to have worn away very much more quickly than the other colours, unless, of course, they have been woven with natural black wool.

An infinite variety of shades is obtained both by judicious blending and by varying the treatment of the substances from which the dyes are extracted. Many considerations affect the final tone of the dye, e.g. the season of the year at which the plants are collected, the time for which they are boiled and

allowed to ferment, the time for which they are exposed to the sun, the mordant used, etc.

Many dyes are used unblended, and many shades, from ivory white and grey to a rich chestnut, are obtained from different wools in their natural state

Mordants are used to make the yarn absorb the dye to the fullest extent, the best-known vegetable mordant is made from pomegranate rind, other mordants are alum and sulphate of iron and tin

### TEST OF DYES

Even if the eye is not sufficiently trained to know at a glance, it is generally easy enough to distinguish whether chemical or vegetable dyes have been used

If the dyes used are not stable the colours at the back of the rug will frequently be cruder and brighter than those on the face, even sometimes by separating the strands of the pile one can see by the brighter colours under the surface that the dye has faded. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that vegetable dyes never fade in this way, the modern ones most certainly very often do fade, and in this lies their inferiority to the antiques, they are not prepared with the same patient care nor with the same precision of knowledge and experience as were the antiques

An excellent solvent for testing dyes is ordinary saliva, it is better than water and than ammonia or weak acids. A small patch of any suspected colour should be well saturated with saliva, and then rubbed hard with a clean white cloth or handkerchief. Good vegetable dyes of some age will not yield, but practically all chemical dyes will do so. Of course if vegetable

dyes are comparatively fresh they too may yield to a certain extent. Sometimes chemically dyed rugs are so "washed" by dealers that under no circumstances would any more colour yield, but such rugs can usually be spotted at a glance by their washy or blurred appearance.

This test for colour is best carried out on the back of the rug and not on the pile, because, if done on the latter, minute portions of the pile will break off and adhere to the handkerchief, thus giving perhaps a false impression that the colour itself has yielded.

### DESIGN (See Chapter on Design)

In addition to resplendent colour, the fascination of design, with its origin and meaning, makes a great appeal to the collector of rugs. In the designs, however primitive, is expressed somewhat of the environment and of the lives, feelings and religion of these savage tribes. They weave into their rugs objects associated with their daily lives, as well as designs of religious significance, the meaning of which has perhaps been lost even to the very tribes who weave them, though the design has been perpetuated faithfully from generation to generation from centuries back.

Designs are either floral, animal, geometrical, or of religious significance, floral and animal designs are mainly Persian, or point to Persian influence. Turkoman designs are nearly always geometrical and repetitive. Even when, as is sometimes the case, an attempt is made to use floral designs (notably in the rugs of Bokhara), it is always in a stiff rectilinear form. Religious emblems creep into almost every Mussulman weave.

The Turkomans are nearly all Sunni Mohammedans, whose

religious tenets forbid them to weave any human or animal representation; the Persians, on the other hand, are largely Shiah Mohammedans, who are less strict and have no such scruples. Both Sunni and Shiah will almost invariably insert some little irregularity, sometimes almost a glaring one, in order to avert the Evil Eye. It is one of their beliefs that no man may dare to make a thing utterly perfect in regular symmetry without incurring the wrath of the deity.

The main Turkoman designs are :—

1. The Octagon.
2. The Diamond.
3. Some form of the Tree of Life.

#### AGE AND CONDITION.

It is age which produces that exquisite softness, mellowness and purity of tone which gives to the antique its immeasurable superiority over the modern from the point of view of artistic beauty.

It is very hard to estimate the age of any carpet with accuracy unless its history be known or the date of manufacture be woven into it; this latter is never done in the case of Turkoman carpets.

In Persian carpets the period of manufacture may often be fixed by some peculiarity of design or of weave or of colour scheme; the Turkomans have been so constant in the maintenance of their designs, colours, and technicalities of weave that these give little clue to age in their case.

Constant practice and comparison with other pieces of which the ages are known, is the only true guide, colour tones and condition being the determining factors.

As regards condition, the purpose for which the rug was intended, and the use to which it was put, must be taken into consideration, *e g* a prayer rug or a *portière* will often be in a better state of preservation than a floor rug of the same age

Nomad Turkoman rugs were not preserved, as were Persian carpets, in mosques and palaces, and this is the reason why there are but few of them in existence which are 200 years old or more, whereas Persian carpets, which have been so preserved, are still in existence after 400 years or so

Constant wear by unshod feet, and also exposure to weather, sun, etc., as well as the mere passage of time, combine to produce the beautiful soft tones and the wonderful sheen of the antiques

The faking of rugs to give them an appearance of age has been brought to a fine art both by the crafty Oriental and by the more scientific Occidental dealers

The sheen and the worn appearance of antiques can be fairly successfully imitated, in the bazaars of Eastern cities the rugs are sometimes spread in the streets to be trampled on, or are buried for a time, smoked over fires, or otherwise ill-treated, and, of course, damaged in the process

European dealers, as well as the Turks, Armenians, and the more advanced Eastern dealers, often wash the rugs in lime-water or with various acids and chemicals, in order to wash out, change, fade, or set the colours, then to produce a sheen they use some such stuff as glycerine and a hot iron

Needless to say, all these processes are more or less harmful to the material of the rug, but some dealers care nothing for fatally impairing a rug provided they can serve it up with an attractive appearance to the unwary purchaser.



This "washing" of rugs with chemicals often reduces them to mere caricatures of their original selves, some dyes, especially if aniline, will be faded to vanishing point, or may even sometimes be completely changed (*i.e.* by the elimination of one of the components of the dye) so that the rug is almost unrecognisable as belonging to its own particular class. The chemicals usually seriously impair the wearing qualities of the wool, and the false sheen is only temporary.

No means have, however, yet been discovered for reproducing the charming effects of the softening process of time on the old dyes, so the eye for colour remains the surest guide. There are also several minor guides which may be useful to bear in mind, for instance, the back of an antique pile rug never has a woolly appearance—all the superfluous hairs of wool have long since been worn off and the back of the knot threads is left with a smooth appearance, even if the rug has only been used as a hanging, similarly the web ends tell their tale—no antique can have comparatively new-looking web ends—indeed, the web ends are generally frayed out before the pile is seriously worn.

The condition of a carpet is often one of the primary considerations of the purchaser, and rightly so, since, unless the carpet is a very exceptional one good wearable condition is a *sine qua non*, there is no market for a badly worn carpet unless it has rare colour or historic interest.

In this connection it may be as well to give the intending purchaser some hints as to the proper way to examine a carpet.

*Examining a carpet*—Whenever possible a carpet should be examined in daylight with the main light running against the direction of the pile, and should be looked at from the direction

of the light; this will show up threadbare places and other defects far better than if the light is running down the pile. An overhead light is only a moderate test, except in a place like a studio where a very strong overhead light can be obtained. Electric or other artificial light gives an exaggerated impression of the sheen and tends to cloak defects.

The rug should always be turned over and the back examined for repairs, slits, holes, etc., which may not be noticeable from the surface. Holes in a good rug do not matter very much provided they are not too large nor too many; they can be so skilfully repaired nowadays, and the colour and design so cleverly matched with original old material, that a carpet thus renovated loses but little of its value or artistic beauty. Armenian women are particularly clever at this work.

The foundation threads of the rug should be tested by subjecting them to a reasonable strain in various places; any rug of which the foundation threads have rotted at once loses its value as a serviceable floor-covering.

The rug should then be held up to the light and examined from the back, when any little holes whence knots have disappeared will immediately be apparent.

A rug which, through careless weaving, "cockles" and does not lie flat, or whose sides are greatly different in length, should be avoided; no amount of damping, stretching and ironing will permanently correct a serious fault of this nature. The only way to remedy it is by cutting the carpet in one or more places and then repairing it; the majority of carpets are not worth the operation, which requires great skill and often much time, labour, and expense in order to make it a success.

In some rugs the edges will be found to curl under, thus exposing the outer part of the border to excessive wear; this is generally due to careless overcasting in the finish, and can often be remedied by undoing and redoing the overcasting.

The purchaser should always see that the finish of the sides is the original one belonging to the rug, and not one recently added, as this will frequently mean that part of the border has been worn away; indeed, it is sometimes necessary to make sure that a complete border from another rug has not been added or substituted, as this is often done with much skill.

#### FINENESS OF TEXTURE.

The fineness of the texture is governed by the following factors: (a) The number of warp threads per inch, measured horizontally. (b) The number of knots per inch on any two adjoining warp threads vertically.

This latter factor is dependent on the fineness of the yarn used for tying the knots, the fineness of the weft thread used, and the tightness with which the rows of knots and the weft are packed down one upon the other, and also, of course, upon the number of times per row of knots that the weft thread is carried through the warp.

Beauty and accuracy of drawing and variety and intricacy of design are dependent on the fineness of the weave.

## ORIGIN OF CARPET WEAVING

**T**HE origin of carpet weaving is lost in the mists of antiquity, but experts suppose that it had its birth in the ancient civilisations of the Egyptians and the Assyrians.

It is known from the study of ancient bas-reliefs and obelisks, as well as from certain writings, that the Assyrians and Babylonians made magnificent carpets as long ago as 1000 to 600 B.C., and the general designs of those carpets, as far as can be ascertained from the decorations discernible on the obelisks, etc., are repeated to this day in the rugs of Asia Minor, Persia, and Central Asia, so that the carpets made there at the present time are the counterparts in design of those used in the palaces and temples of ancient Assyria and Nineveh.

It is supposed that the ancient designs of the Euphrates country, mythological creatures and flowers, have formed the basis of design for rug decoration for the last 2000 years and more.

It is more than likely that the hangings referred to in the Old Testament in Moses's instructions for the arrangement of the Tabernacle (*circa* 1494 B.C.) were of the nature of suspended carpets.

Bogoliouboff mentions that on the black Assyrian obelisk of Shalmaneser II., who in the 9th century B.C. conquered Iiouyia, King of Judæa, there appear two slaves carrying on their shoulders

a pole on which are hung two heavily fringed carpets, part of a presentation to Shalmaneser by Iachoua, son of Choumry.

However, the earliest known authentic mention of the Turkoman fabrics is by Marco Polo, the explorer, who travelled through Tartary in the 13th century, at which time it appears that their reputation for beauty and excellence was firmly established.

Similarly in certain very early pictures dating back as far as the 15th century there appear carpets which are unmistakably Turkoman.

Linen coverings overwrought with ornament in loops of coloured wool (Egypto-Roman, 3rd or 4th century A.D.) are the earliest extant specimens of anything approaching a piled carpet, but this is only a step in the direction of the introduction of tufts into loom weaves. It is not known when cut pile carpets were first made, but it seems probable that the art is of approximately the same date as that of making velvets, to which their texture is closely akin. This would appear to be not much earlier than the 12th century A.D.

The finer Persian piled carpets were not made much earlier than the 15th century, but it seems possible that piled textiles of a kind may have been first made by Saracens at Cairo somewhat earlier than the 13th century.

## PROCESS OF WEAVING AND MATERIALS

IT is not within the scope of this monograph to enter very deeply into the process of weaving, practically speaking, the whole of the Turkoman tribes have the same style and use the same methods, so it may be of interest briefly to describe those methods

A loom usually consists of an upright rectangular framework of four poles, to the upper and lower of which the warp threads are attached and made taut. The spacing of these warp threads determines to a great extent the ultimate fineness of the carpet, and on them the knots are tied, one knot horizontally to every two adjacent warp threads. Delicacy of drawing of the design is obviously greatly dependent on the fineness of texture of the carpet

The side poles of the loom may be driven into the ground, or may only be tree trunks at a convenient distance apart, having suitable forks at an equal height from the ground to support the top pole

Such is the crudest form of loom. Of course looms have been elaborated and improved with all sorts of ingenious labour-saving devices by the more civilised rug makers in recent times until they have reached the perfected article now used in the modern rug factories

Wool threads (weft) are those threads which are thrown

across from one side of the rug to the other and back again, over and under alternate warp threads after each row of knots to knit the whole fabric together, so to speak. Thus, by the passage of the weft across and back again, each warp thread is completely encircled once by weft.

The Turkomans invariably pass the weft across and back once between each row of knots, but certain other rug-weavers vary both the number of times the weft is thrown across and also the number of rows of knots between which it is passed across.

The weft is passed across by means of a shuttle; various devices, in the shape of movable rods, etc., have been used to facilitate the rapid passage of the shuttle by separating out the odd and even warp threads.

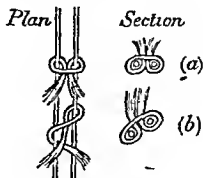
Each row of knots and of weft is packed down upon the preceding row with a kind of comb; the tighter the packing the firmer is the texture of the rug. The rugs of the Yomuts, Tekkes, Salors and Saryks are the firmest, whilst those of the Afghan Turkomans, modern Ersaris, and those made in Bokhara and Afghanistan are generally of looser texture.

The knots having been tied, the shaggy ends of the pile are clipped off evenly with a kind of shears after every few rows of knots; it requires no small skill to maintain even clipping throughout.

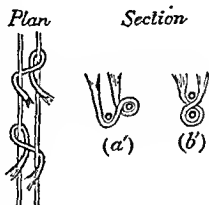
On the length of the pile depends to a great extent the clear definition of the design, the shorter the pile the clearer the design. The coarser carpets, such as the Afghan Turkomans, have the longest pile.

*Knots.*—There are only two kinds of knots used by the Oriental weaver :—

## 1. The Turkish, or Ghiordes, knot.



## 2. The Persian, or Sehna, knot.



The only variations of these knots lie in the tying of them right-handed or left-handed, *i. e.* with the loop of the knot thread round the right hand or round the left hand of the two warp threads on which the knot is tied.

It will be seen from the illustrations that in the Turkish style both ends of the knot thread come up together between each pair of warp threads, whereas in the Persian style one end of a knot



thread comes up on each side of a warp thread. Thus in both styles of weave there is only one knot to each pair of adjoining warp threads.

Dealers almost invariably double the estimate of the number of knots to the square inch in any particular rug by reckoning as a knot each appearance of the knot thread behind the warp threads.

In this connection it is as well to note that the backs of different rugs present slightly different appearances according to the relative positions of the two adjoining warp threads on which a knot is tied ; some present an even, others a corrugated, appearance. This is dependent on the manner in which the knot is tied, *i. e.* on whether the two ends of the knot thread are pulled with equal or with unequal tension ; it is also dependent to a certain extent upon whether the weft is drawn tightly across or left with plenty of slack.

The two extremes are shown in the illustrations, (*a*) where the warp threads lie horizontally side by side, (*b'*) where they lie vertically one above the other.

It is obvious that when they lie as in (*b'*) the foundation of the carpet is doubly thick.

Practically all Turkoman weaves are as shown in (*a'*).

To find out whether a rug is made with the Turkish or the Persian knot a portion of the rug should be doubled back lengthways (*i. e.* along and not across the warp threads) until one vertical line of knots stands clear ; then by separating the two yarn ends of each of several consecutive knots it can be noticed whether a warp thread can be seen running along the middle between the separated ends of the knots ; if so, the knot is Persian ; if not, it is Turkish.

The Turkoman tribes use almost exclusively the Persian knot, though just occasionally a rug may be found with the Turkish knot; not infrequently prayer rugs are found to have the first two or three knots at each side of each row of knots in the Turkish knot, the main body of the rug being in the Persian knot.

Sometimes the very finest grades of prayer rug are woven throughout in the Turkish knot: witness the Saryk Turkoman prayer rug illustrated in colour opposite page 114, Plate B. This, however, is rare, and seldom occurs except in the finest antiques.

Turkish and Caucasian rugs are always woven with the Turkish knot. Persian rugs are mostly woven with the Turkish knot, but in a good many districts the Persian knot is used.

That is about as much as can usefully be said here about the body of the rug; it remains only to say a few words on the finish of the ends and sides.

All Turkoman rugs have web ends at each end, generally fairly long and often striped; their object is to protect the pile at the ends from excessive wear and consequent fraying. At the end of the webbing is usually a row of knots and a fringe. The web ends are nearly always coloured in consonance with the body of the rug, but are sometimes left white.

Often at each top corner of a rug there is attached a stout rope of twisted wool for the purpose of hanging the rug up as a *portière* or to facilitate moving the rug from place to place when necessary.

The sides of a rug must also be strengthened against wear, and this is accomplished by an overcasting or a selvedge. For this purpose there is usually one, or more, cords of fairly thick

diameter at each side, and parallel to, the warp threads, and on this cord, or cords, is wound the overcasting or the selvedge yarn.

The finish called weft-overcasting is accomplished by winding the weft thread round the thick cord at each side after the shuttle has been passed through the warp; the weft is wound round these side cords for a space equal to the thickness of a row of knots before being again shuttled across to the opposite side, where the same process is gone through.

Weft-selvedge is the name given to the side finish when two or more cords are utilised at each side of the rug and encircled by the weft in a figure-of-eight fashion.

Double overcasting and double selvedge are the names given to the side finishes when they are still further strengthened by additional separate yarn being wound on to the side cords over the top of the weft-overcasting or selvedge.

This extra yarn, used for the outer windings over the selvedge or overcasting, is often also wound round two or more threads of warp to strengthen the attachment.

Care is required in this seemingly simple process of finishing, otherwise, if the overcasting is too tight, the sides of the rug may curl under, exposing the edge of the border to all the wear.

Sometimes the selvedge is not made by encircling the outer cords by the weft, but is attached to the sides of the rug by the separate yarn which is used for making the selvedge.

### MATERIALS

The material used by the Turkomans in making their rugs is the wool of sheep, goats and camels; the latter two animals produce in the rigours of the cold season a fleecy undergrowth under

the hair, and this makes an excellent wool for weaving. The hair of the goat is also largely used both for making the warp and for the selvedge.

Silk is not used in any great quantities; when used, it is usually a kind of raw silk of a magenta colour; it is seen in some of the carpets of the Ersari Turkomans of the type sometimes called "Beshir"; it is also found in some of the small pieces such as *jowals* and *torbas* from the Merv and Punjeh districts. The Turkomans never use silk for the foundation of a rug, nor do they ever weave carpets entirely of silk, as is done at Kashan and other places in Persia.

The wools are often used in their natural colours, *i.e.* ivory whites, blacks, greys, fawn, and various shades of chestnut (from camels).

Cotton is never used in true Turkoman rugs, either for foundation or for pile.

The quality of the material is dependent on climate, on the care taken of the animals, and on the physical conditions of the country, etc.

Now the Turkoman country, in spite of, or perhaps even partly on account of, its rigours of climate, produces sheep with perhaps the finest and most luxuriant fleeces in the world. The camels of Bactria also are world famous and have great shaggy coats, the under-wool of which is splendid material for the finest grades of carpets, as also is the undergrowth of *lanib's* wool, called Pashm.

The preparation of the materials, *i.e.* spinning, washing, drying, dyeing, etc., was all done by simple primitive processes with infinite patience and precise care by a people to whom time was

of little account ; they brought to these labours a perfection of experience and art that accounts for the unsurpassed beauty of the results.

The washing of the wool is a most important factor, as upon the manner in which the wool is washed and dried depends its capacity for the absorption of the dye and also its ultimate wearing quality. Clear running water is essential ; this explains the fact that the rug-weaving tribes are those which inhabit the valleys of streams.

For weft the Turkomans use brown wool of narrow diameter. The knot-yarn is fine, except in those Bokharas which approximate to the Samarkand type, and also in Afghan Turkomans, which are of coarse texture throughout.

## SUMMARY OF THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TURKOMAN RUGS

**DESIGN.**—Geometric and repetitive throughout the field; octagonal and diamond forms predominant. Floral forms are few, except in Bokharâs, and are always stiff and rectilinear. Conventionalised Trees of Life are very common. Animal designs are seldom represented except the scorpion, fish, and tarantula designs in Bokhara borders and the small dog-like design in certain nomad Turkoman rugs.

**Colouring.**—Subdued and rich, reds being predominant, with minor quantities of ivory, dark blue, green, and sometimes orange, magenta or plum colour. Bokharas are more garish and often show considerable quantities of warm yellow.

**Knot.**—Persian (very occasionally Turkish) and usually of fine yarn. Bokharas and Afghan Turkomans generally have a thicker yarn.

**Pile.**—Close clipped in the nomad Turkoman rugs. Of medium length in most Bokharas, and often long in Afghan Turkomans.

**Wef.**—One strand of weft each way between each row of knots.

**Materials.**—Wool throughout for warp, weft and pile; goat hair is often used for side finish, and sometimes in the warp. Minor quantities of raw silk, usually of a magenta colour, are

occasionally introduced in the pile. Cotton is never used even for the warp (Samarkands excluded).

*Finish*.—Longish web ends, often striped, completed by a fringe, sometimes knotted.

Side finish is frequently a triple goat-hair selvedge or a double overcasting in red or blue wool.

## DESIGN

**A**MONGST those Central Asian peoples, whom we regard as uncivilised and without culture, are found, not designs and colour-schemes that vary at the whim and caprice or change of taste of persons steeped in luxury, but constant unvarying designs and colour-schemes that are the inalienable property of the whole people, the expression of the æsthetic need of a nation rather than of individuals. To these nomads, carpets are a necessity, not a luxury, their constant companions both at rest and on the move.

There has been much controversy on the subject of the origin and respective merits of curvilinear and rectilinear designs. According to one theory, the primitive artist was restricted in his decoration by the results obtainable from the plaiting of certain kinds of fibres, reeds, etc., and, in consequence, the primitive mode of decoration was essentially rectilinear. This may be so, but is no proof that all existing rectilinear designs are therefore primitive. Some authorities go further. Without agreeing that restrictions of weaving methods were the absolute basis of rectilinear design, they assert that the rectilinear is essentially more primitive and less cultured than the curvilinear. Others maintain that floral and curvilinear designs are Aryan, and rectilinear designs Turkoman. Some prefer to divide carpets and designs on a geographical rather than an ethnographical basis, *i. e.* into those of Asia Minor



and those of Persia, subdividing the latter into true Persians and nomads. Such an arbitrary division brings us no nearer to solving the connection between deenration and nationality, which connection assuredly exists, precisely as there exists a connection between style of weave and nationality.

Moreover, an arbitrary geographical division such as this classes all nomads together without distinction of origin, regardless of the fact that the various nomad weaves show many differences of design, colouring, and style.

The theory that all rectilinear designs are primitive and denote an imperfect culture is untenable. When one sees the wonderful colouring and perfect harmonies of the Turkoman fabrics, one realises without any shadow of doubt that such taste and understanding in the art of decoration, rectilinear though it be, is far removed from the suspicion of primitiveness and lack of culture that it is, in fact, the legacy (perhaps the sole one) of a former very high state of culture, existing in some bygone age, which has survived the crash of kingdoms and of civilisations that has reduced the succeeding generations to the status of outcasts and nomads.

It is more reasonable to regard curvilinear design as that of people who copied floral, animal, and other mundane models, and rectilinear design as that of people who endeavoured to express abstract ideas in geometric form.

At all events, in the recognised types of Turkoman fabrics is displayed all that is best and most beautiful of the collective æsthetic labours of a long roll of generations.

## DESIGN

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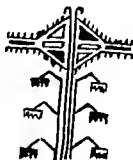
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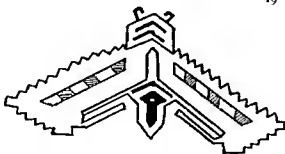
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## SOME COMMON DESIGNS OF THE TURKOMANS

Fig. 1.—The octagonal disc is a very ordinary design showing Caucasian influence. It is frequently found in the rugs of South-Western Afghanistan, but is not common in the real Turkoman rugs.

Fig. 2.—The Swastika (*Fylfot*) has a variety of forms. It symbolises abundance, fertility, prosperity, etc., and is of very early Aryan origin. It is found in Samarkand rugs, but is not, strictly speaking, a Turkoman design.

Fig. 3.—The minor design of "S" shape, either horizontal or vertical, is very common in Turkoman weaves. A symbol originally connected with sun-worship.

Fig. 4.—Found in great variety in Persian rugs, but only in somewhat crude form in certain Turkomans. Best known as the Cone, it has various other names, such as Pear, Gourd, Mango, Almond, etc., on account of its shape, but in all probability it represented in the first place the cone of fire sacred to those of the Zoroastrian faith. Certain other explanations are at least feasible and interesting. Some say it is a representation of the composite jewel in the *Taj* of the Persian Sultan; others, that it was originally suggested by the bend of the river Indus in the mountains of Kashmir—certainly the Kashmiri figure is always of a graceful elongated shape. Another supposition is that the design originated from the old Oriental seal or sign-manual made by the imprint of the side of the hand and little finger, half closed and smeared with ink. Others consider it to be a conventionalisation of the inflorescence of the date-palm.

Fig. 5.—The eight-petalled flower is another very common



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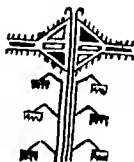
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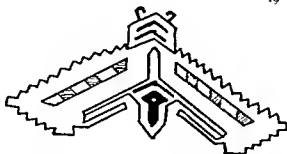
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device, especially, perhaps, in the lower borders of Turkoman prayer rugs. The rosette of certain Southern Afghan rugs is a slightly different treatment of this same device.

Fig. 6.—The eight-pointed star, supposed to have originated from the seal of Solomon, and found in nearly all Turkoman weaves.

Fig. 7.—A small triangle contained within a larger one is also common, and is probably of Aryan origin.

Fig. 8.—The representation of a comb is of frequent occurrence in nearly all Mohammedan weaves. In all probability, this is depicted as an emblem of cleanliness connected with the religious ablutions of the Mohammedans. On the other hand, it may be merely the comb used for packing down the weft and rows of knots in the process of weaving.

Fig. 9.—It needs but little imagination to suppose that this design, usually repeated vertically until it assumes the form of a conventionalised Tree of Life, is by origin a representation of suspended rugs, as depicted on the ancient obelisk of Shalmaneser II.

Fig. 10.—This conventionalised cross-shape is of very common occurrence, and was originally possibly a seal or signet.

Figs. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.—The Tree of Life is found in one form or another in practically every type of Oriental rug. It takes a great variety of different forms, the Turkoman representation of it being, as might be expected, very stiff and rectilinear, even at times so conventionalised as to be hardly recognisable for what it is. It symbolises the joys of Paradise.

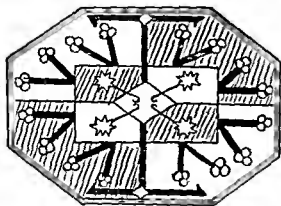
## ANIMAL DESIGNS

With the exception of the rugs of Bokhara, in the borders of which are often designs representing scorpions (Fig. 17), tarantulas, and the so-called "fish" motive (Fig. 16), no true Turkoman rug contains unconventionalised animal representations, saving only that dogs (Fig. 18), in very minute form, or, more rarely, camels, are sometimes introduced. Certain tribes, however, do make use of what are undoubtedly conventionalised animal forms. The following are the commonest: Fig. 19 represents the head and neck of a bird; probably the bustard; Fig. 20, a conventionalised dog. These two are frequently found in the outer quarterings of the octagons of carpets of the Afghan Turkoman type woven by the tribes on the Afghan-Bokhara border at the extreme eastern extremity of the Ersari country, and also sometimes in the rugs of the Saryks, the Tekkes, and the Salors. Figs. 21 and 22 are Yomut designs—the former is supposed by some to represent a gliding eagle or seagull, and the latter has been interpreted as a representation of the two-headed Russian eagle, but, if so, it is of comparatively modern origin.

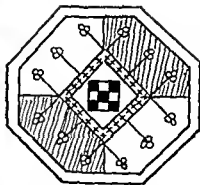
## THE TRIBAL FIELD DEVICES OF THE TURKOMANS

In order to differentiate between the rugs of the various Turkoman tribes, it is necessary to observe that each tribe has cultivated some main field device peculiar to itself. These patterns are referred to by the generic term "*gul*," which really means a rose or a flower, but has come to signify in this particular sense an ornamental device. These tribal devices are commonly referred to as the *Salor Gul*, the *Saryk Gul*, the *Tekke Gul*, the *Yomut Gul*, the *Ersari Gul*, and so on.

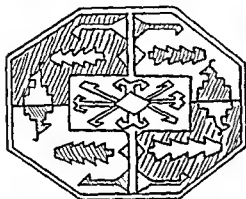
TURKOMAN FIELD DESIGNS OR GÜLS



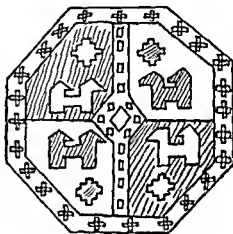
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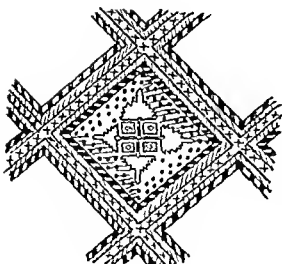
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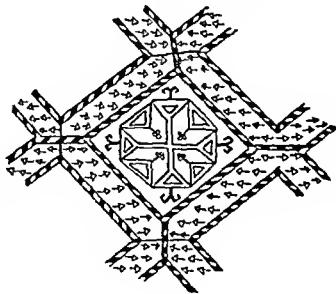
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The principal element of the Salor design, *i.e.* their *gul*, is an octagonal form (Fig 33), and it appears that it was the Salor octagon which was the prototype of the octagons of the Saryks and Tekkes (Figs 29, 30, 31, 32, 34), since the Salors are the most ancient tribe, and are said to have communicated in the first instance the art of weaving to the Saryks, who in turn passed it on to the Tekkes, each of these tribes fashioning its own variant of the original Salor *gul*. If this is so, more is the pity that the majority of the Salor tribe has practically ceased to produce carpets since their emigration to Sarakhs, as a consequence of the fact that the Persian khans continually forced them to give up, without payment, all the best, if not every one, of the carpets they made.

The Salor *gul*, then, with variations, remained the fundamental element of ornamentation amongst the Saryks and the Tekkes, particularly of Merv. The Tekkes of Askhabad and Tejend have, under Yomut influence, modified their *gul*, to its detriment.

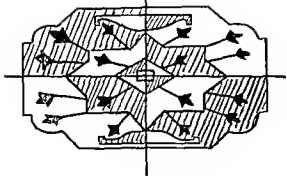
The Yomut *gul* (Figs 38, 39, 40, 41) is ordinarily of diamond shape, but is often most complicated in the details of its contour. More recently many new variations of *gul*, such as conventionalised eagles and crosses, have been introduced. The ornamentation of the Yomut group, which, having been subjected to diverse outside influences, has proved itself more imitative than other groups, is extremely varied, and veers from ancient Assyrian devices to conventionalised representations of the double-headed Russian eagle.

The Ersaris are another group who have admitted outside influences to mar the purity of their original design. For instance, certain of them, particularly in the neighbourhood of Beshir and along the north bank of the Oxus river in Bokharan territory,

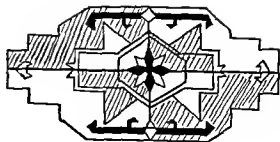
have been greatly influenced by their Bokharan neighbours, and through them by the Turco-Chinese group. Others of the Ersaris who live at the eastern end of the Ersari country, about Kizi Ayak, have freely copied the *gul* of their neighbours, the Afghan Turkomans (Figs. 25 and 26), so that their rugs appear to belong to this latter type rather than to the Ersari group. It may almost be said that the Ersari rug which is true to original type is the exception rather than the rule. The Ersari *gul* proper (Figs. 27 and 28) was a geometric device, octagonal, square, or cross-shaped, contained within a panel of a diamond-shaped trellis-work of somewhat broad lines in which the alternation of red, blue, and green, and the appearance of a small, stiff flower form, were characteristic features.

The *gul* of the Afghan Turkomans (Figs. 23 and 24) is very bold and distinctive, larger in size than that of any other tribe. It consists of a large regular octagon, quartered in the customary Turkoman fashion, each one nearly in contact with the next, and enclosing at its centre a square. In the purest type the minor designs within the quarterings are well-defined trefoil shapes and eight-pointed, effulgent stars, together with the strange geometric projections supposed to represent the head and neck of a bustard. Here, again, the tribes which have come in contact with other Turkomans, especially with the Ersaris, have introduced foreign elements.

The carpets of Bokhara can hardly be said to have any distinctive *gul* of their own, being commonly of an all-over pattern of stiff rectilinear floral design (Figs. 35, 36, 37). They are, in fact, hybrids, to the production of which Persian, Mongolian, and Turkoman influences have all contributed.



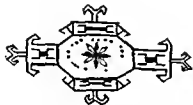
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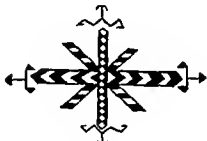
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FIGS 29 AND 30—OCTAGONS OF THE TEKE TURKOMANS

FIGS 31 AND 32—  
DIAMOND SHAFTS  
FOUND BETWEEN THE  
OCTAGONS OF TEKE  
AND SARYK RUGS



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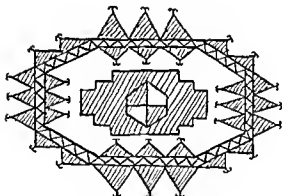


FIG 33

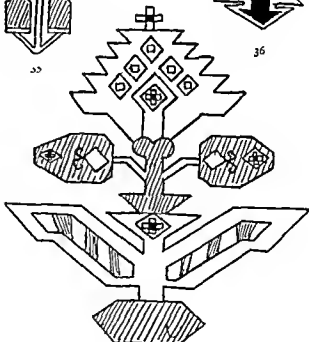
FIG 33—SARYK RUG



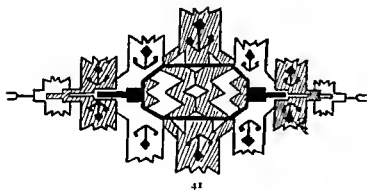
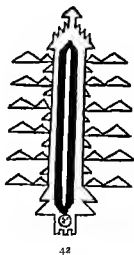
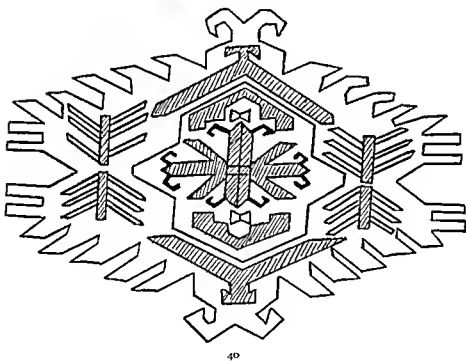
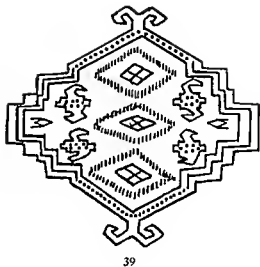
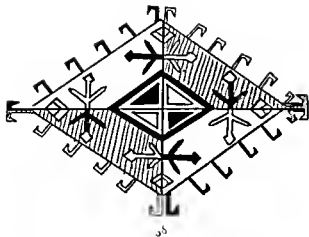
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FIGS 35 39 40 AND 41 —KORDE DESIGNS SHOWING THEIR GREAT DIVERSITY. FIG 39 TYPICAL OF CHALOR SUB DIVISION. FIG 40 TYPICAL OF OGURJALI SUBDIVISION.

FIGS 42 AND 43 TYPICAL FORMATIONS FOUND IN THE CARPETS OF SOUTH WESTERN AFGHANISTAN.

## AFGHAN RUGS

The Afghan group, consisting of the Herati, Adraskand, Sabzwar, the so-called Beluchi and their kind, is also without any distinctive *gul*, though great, ill-defined, irregular figures and eight-petalled rosettes are their common designs (Figs. 42 and 43).

It cannot be over-emphasised that these last two groups are not true Turkomans, in comparison with which they may be regarded as of more modern origin.

## GENERAL REMARKS ON NOMENCLATURE

**T**HERE is such widespread misconception on the subject of Turkoman, Bokhara, and Afghan rugs that the illustration of a few very early and interesting specimens may serve the purpose of shedding light where hitherto ignorance has reigned supreme.

The main cause of confusion is the variety of names which for trade purposes is applied to these carpets of Central Asia. Some of these names, such as "Bokhara" and "Khiva," are given promiscuously to practically every type of Turkoman rug, and indeed to others that are not even Turkoman, the reason being that these two cities are the capitals of the khanates bearing those names, and are big trade centres, to which come all classes of Turkoman weaves as merchandise. As a matter of fact, neither city (Bokhara nor Khiva) is to any great extent a rug-making centre, though both are big rug-markets. Actually, the rugs woven in the Khanate of Bokhara are but a small proportion of the Central Asian output, and by no means the best, nor do they very closely resemble the rugs usually mislabelled "Bokhara," which are in reality those woven by the nomad Turkoman tribes of Transcaspia. Similarly, the rugs woven in the Khanate of Khiva are, practically speaking, all woven by the Yomut Turkomans and their kindred tribes settled in the province.

Then, again, a lot of meaningless names are introduced,

## AFGHAN RUGS

presumably with the object of differentiating for trade purposes between distinct types of which the true origin is not known and these names, such, for instance, as "Royal Bokhara," "Princess Bokhara," "Tekke Bokhara," even "Khiva Bokhara," and so on *ad nauseam*, only make confusion worse confounded.

Similarly, in some cases a genuine attempt is made to classify these rugs according to the districts in which they were supposed to be woven, e.g. "Merv," "Punjdeh," "Beshir," etc. Now, although this system of classification is a sound one as regards Persian rugs, it is apt to break down and be most misleading when applied to Turkomans, since these nomad tribes have for many ages been engaged in internecine strife, in turn ousting each other from the more favoured localities. For example, the Merv oasis has during the 19th century alone been occupied in turn by the Salors, Saryks, and Tekke Turkomans, so that the rugs of any of these tribes might correctly be called "Merv" rugs according to their period of manufacture.

A still further cause of confusion is the number of hybrids that have grown up connecting the pure tribal types, from such causes as intermarriage between tribes, the capture and enslavement of large numbers of one tribe by another tribe, etc.

## BOKHARA AND ITS PEOPLE

### BOKHARA

**F**OR many Englishmen there is a romantic fascination about Bokhara since the days when Colonel Stoddart and Captain Connolly, who may be styled our first ambassadors to that country, were cruelly murdered there in 1842.

Some description of the country and its people will therefore, not be out of place. As it is now in the hands of the Bolsheviks, who were recently [written autumn 1920] reported to be disputing with the Young Bokharans on the question of the sharing of the loot, it is only possible to try and depict it as *it was some years ago—before the Great War.*

To start with, it is not generally known that the common Central Asian pronunciation of the name is Bukhārā.

Bokhara is now a small khanate (or rather was until the advent of the Bolsheviks) situated on the right bank of the middle Oxus, bounded by the Russian Governments of Syr-darya, Samarkand and Ferghana on the north, the Pamirs on the east, Afghanistan on the south, and the Transcaspian territory and Khiva on the west.

The chief river of Bokhara is the Oxus or Amu Darya, which separates it from Afghanistan on the south, and then flows along its south-west border. The next largest river, the Zerafshan, the



## AFGHAN RUGS

water of which is largely used for irrigation, is lost in the sands twenty miles before reaching the Oxus.

The climate is extreme and very dry. Rains are scarce, and the lowlands are sometimes visited by terrible sandstorms from the west.

The total area, including the Khanates of Karateghin and Darvaz, is about 85,000 square miles. The population is estimated at 1,250,000. The dominant race is the Uzbeks, who are fanatical Sunni Mohammedans, scorn work, despise their Iranian subjects, and maintain their old division into tribes or clans. The nomad Turkomans and the nomad Khirghiz are also of Turkish origin, while the Sarts, who constitute the bulk of the population in the towns, are a mixture of Turks with Iranians. The great bulk of the population in the country is composed of Iranian Tajiks, who differ but very little from Sarts. Besides these there are Afghans, Persians, Jews, Arabs, Armenians, and Hindus. Nearly 20 per cent. of the population are nomads and about 15 per cent. semi-nomads.

Cotton and silk are largely produced, and cattle-breeding is vigorously prosecuted. There are very few roads; goods are transported on camels, or on horses and donkeys in the hilly tracts.

Bokhara has for ages been looked upon as the centre of Mussulman erudition in Central Asia. About one-fourth of the population is said to be able to read and write. The mullahs, or priests, enjoy very great influence, but the people are very superstitious, believing in witchcraft, omens, spirits, and the Evil Eye.

Bokhara was known to the ancients under the name of Sogdiana; its history has been a troublous one, since it has shared deeply in all the various and bloody revolutions and invasions of

Asia. In the 5th century it was conquered by Tartar tribes, and again in the 6th century by Turks and Persians; later, in the 8th century, it was subdued by Arab and Semitic tribes, and again in the 13th century by Jenghiz Khan and his Mongolian hordes, and in the 14th century by Timur the Great (Tamerlane), under whom Mohammedanism reached great splendour and came nearest to world domination.

Early in the 16th century it was overrun by the Uzbek Tartars under Abul Khair Khan, the founder of the Shaibani dynasty, with which the history of Bokhara properly commences. During the 16th century the limits of the kingdom were greatly extended by the conquest of Badakshan, Herat, and Meshed, but before the close of the century the Shaibani dynasty was extinct, and Bokhara was at once desolated by a Khirghiz invasion and distracted by a disputed succession. Following this the dynasty of Ashtar Khanides was introduced.

Early in the 17th century the district of Khiva, previously subject to Bokhara, was made an independent khanate by Abdul Ghazi Bahadur Khan.

In the 18th century the invasion of Nadir Shah of Persia came to complete the degradation of the land.

In the 19th century Bokhara became an object of rivalry to Russia and England, and envoys were sent by both nations to cultivate the favour of the Emir, who treated the Russians with arrogance and the English with contempt.

However, in 1806 the Russians attacked and defeated the Bokharans at Irdjar, on the left bank of the Jaxartes, and, finally, after entering Samarkand in 1868, they reduced Bokhara to the position of a puppet state.

## BOKHARA CITY

The city of Bokhara (Bokhara-i-Sherif), capital of the state, lies on the left bank of the Zerafshan, and on the irrigation canal of Shahri-rud, situated in a fertile plain. The old and new cities of Bokhara are separate. The new city has white houses, avenues of trees, broad streets, and shops. A by-line from the railway (eight miles) goes to the old city—a grey city, full of narrow, winding streets and alleys, with practically no gardens or open spaces. A broad stone wall, twenty-eight feet high, some eight miles in circumference, with semicircular towers and eleven gates, closes it in. The present city was begun in A.D. 830 on the site of an older city, was destroyed by Jenghiz Khan in 1220, and rebuilt subsequently. The ruins of former dwellings form the bases of houses, mostly one-storied, with flat roofs, built of unburnt bricks, ancient tiles, and mud. Some of the theological colleges, mosques, and other principal buildings exhibit very fine architecture. Fine old carved wood doors may be seen in plenty, but no windows open on to the streets, as the women-folk are strictly “purdah.”

In the city is a brick minaret more than 200 feet high, from the top of which state criminals used to be thrown until as recently as 1871. The citadel, containing amongst other buildings the palace of the Emir, is erected on an artificially made eminence forty-five feet high, surrounded by a wall one mile long.

For ages Bokhara has been a centre of learning and religious life, and is, in fact, still the principal book market of Central Asia. There are still treasures of literature concealed in private

libraries, and Afghan, Persian, Armenian, and Turkish bibliophiles still repair to Bokhara to buy rare books.

It is also the most important trading town in Central Asia. In its rich and rare bazaars lustrous silks and gorgeous carpets are offered for sale on a scale greater than in the markets of London or Paris.

The old city was, until recently, almost a perfect model of a Mohammedan city, little touched by Western influences. The changes wrought by Bolshevism remain to be seen. Less than a century ago the Bokhariots were a warlike and fanatical Mohammedan race, but in later years they have become a gentle, almost an effeminate, people. They no longer carry arms; they are without ambition; civilisation, though it reached them, did not tempt them, nor indeed did it seem to affect them. In so far, however, as it taught them the use of cheap chemical dyes, it had far from an edifying influence on their arts and crafts, and it is doubtful if even extreme Bolshevism will succeed in putting back civilisation so far as to create an art revival!

## BOKHARA CARPETS

CARPETS are not made in Bokhara City itself in any large numbers, but are mostly the product of nomad Turkoman looms. Bokhara, though but the market for their beautiful fabrics, is popularly credited with their production, whereas in reality the produce *par excellence* of Bokhara is its lovely silks. The carpet-making industry is now carried on by Armenians and Persians, as well as by the Bokhariots and Turkomans, in whole villages and settlements throughout Bokhara and Transcaspia.

The carpets which may most accurately be called Bokharas are mostly made in the south-western portion of the province, principally by Turkoman settlers and by certain of the Khirghiz who have learnt the art from the Turkomans. Practically speaking, the Uzbegs, Sarts, and Tajiks, forming the great majority of the population of Bokhara, do not concern themselves with the carpet-weaving industry. The Khirghiz in many parts of Central Asia, from Khiva to Ferghana, have learnt from their neighbours how to weave piled carpets, and in their respective districts they produce rugs of Yomut, Ersari, Bokharan, or Mongolian type as the case may be.

Bokhara rugs differ from those of the true Turkomans both in design and colouring, though they show kinship as regards the knot used, (Persian) and the finish of the ends and sides, and other technicalities of weave.

As regards colouring, these rugs resemble the Turkoman fabrics in their employment of large quantities of Turanian red, but differ from them in the introduction of a considerable amount of yellow, chiefly in the borders. This is obviously an importation from further East. The colours on the whole, though good, are somewhat more garish than those of the Turkomans, and show influences from Samarkand and the Turko-Chinese group generally.

As regards design, their kinship with Turkoman rugs is only seen in the stiff geometric treatment of their floral devices, the employment of which shows Persian influence. Moreover, they introduce other designs showing distinct Mongolian influence.

Indeed, in view of their varied history of invasions and the cosmopolitan nature of the population, it should be no surprise to see that their rugs show distinct influences from practically all the rug-making countries anywhere near; e.g. Turko-Chinese, Persian, Afghan, Turkoman, and even Caucasian.

*Description of Plate.*—The rug chosen for illustration is a fine specimen about one hundred years old, and may be regarded as very typical of its class. In the trade this rug would probably not be classified as a "Bokhara" at all, nor yet in the majority of books written on Oriental rugs. By some it would be called a "Samarkand," by others a "Beshir"; the truth being that it is neither one nor other, but lies between the two (Samarkand being to the north-east and Beshir to the south-west of Bokhara), and is a connecting link between the Turko-Chinese group of rugs and those of the nomad Turkomans.

The plate, illustrating slightly more than half the carpet, shows clearly that the resemblance between these rugs and those

## AFGHAN RUGS

of the nomads is confined to similarity of weave and finish coupled with an abundant use of Turkoman red in the colouring.

For the rest, the polygonal medallion in the centre and the free use of yellow are Turko-Chinese influences from further East. The general design in the field is a stiff variation of the design found in some Persian rugs, notably in those of Feraghah and of ancient Herat, at the time when it was a part of the Persian Empire. The introduction of small cones in the medallion is also a Persian device stiffly treated.

The portrayal of scorpions, tarantulas, and fish designs in the borders is Caucasian in feeling, and may also be considered Mongolian, since the latter introduce dragons, butterflies, fish etc., into their carpets.

This introduction of representations of animal life into their rugs is more common amongst the Bokhariots than amongst the Turkomans, though, strictly speaking, it is contrary to the religious tenets of Sunni Mohammedans to represent any form of animal life in their handiwork. Shiah Mohammedans, on the other hand, have little, if any, objection to doing so.

The rug is stoutly woven in the Persian knot, the pile being of thick, double yarn, and of moderate length. The stitch is close, the texture firm, and the state of preservation excellent. The colours, though slightly garish compared with the more sombre tones of the Turkomans, are of sterling quality.

The Bokhara rug proper is never woven very finely, but is usually of stout texture and of good material, though inferior to the best Turkoman rugs.

## TURKOMAN RUGS

### I.—GENERAL REMARKS

PASSING now to a consideration of the carpets of the true nomad Turkoman tribes of Transcaspia, it is proposed to take the tribes in a regular cycle, starting with the Ersaris and the Afghan Turkomans on the borders of Bokhara, then working south-west to the Saryks and Salors near the boundaries of Afghanistan and Persia, and proceeding westwards via the Tekkes to the Yomuts with their many kindred tribes scattered over the western portion of Transcaspia along the Caspian littoral and as far as Khiva, and finishing with the group which may be called the South-Western Afghan group belonging to the region near Herat and extending as far as Beluĉistan. This group is not strictly a Turkoman group at all.

A supplementary note on two Persian rugs of Shiraz and Niris is also given.

In this way it is hoped to show the points of similarity between the rugs of neighbouring tribes, and to enable the student to solve some of the riddles of the migration of certain designs and other features, and to classify the hybrids which tend to merge one type into another.

The province of Transcaspia, wherein dwell most of the nomad Turkomans, whose women-folk are the makers of the rugs



known as Turkomans, is the south-western portion of Turkestan, bounded on the south by Persia and Afghanistan, on the north-east by the river Oxus from Afghanistan to the Aral Sea, and on the west by the Caspian Sea.

The whole of the centre of this tract of country is the desert of Kara Kum (Black Sands), which is a shadeless, waterless waste of loose sand, stretching for a hundred miles or more, in which there is hardly a living thing, animal or vegetable; interminable yellow sandhills, ribbed by the wind like a sea-beach, with nowhere a flower to be seen; and yet this yellow sand becomes abundantly fertile wherever water can be brought to it; witness the fertility where irrigation channels from the Oxus and Murghab rivers have been constructed.

In the summer it is swept by terrible sandstorms and by hot fever-giving winds, called Teb-bad, and in the winter it is clothed deep in snow. In and around this inhospitable desert are the encampments of the once fierce, hardy, marauding Turkoman tribes.

The rainfall is slight and the rivers few. The cultivable portions of the country are comparatively small, and lie along the fertile courses of the river. The nomad tribes are compelled to be constantly on the move in search of fresh pasturage for their enormous flocks of sheep and goats, and for their camels, horses, and asses. Thus they drive their vast herds from the lowlands to the hills and back again, according to the season of the year, and are constantly also seeking to force weaker neighbours to yield up the more fertile places.

The struggle for existence in the most primitive sense has made these people lawless, cruel, and independent, and yet has left

It is convenient to divide the rugs of the Ersaris into three main classes :—

(a) The Ersari proper of the original virile Turkoman type (*vide* colour plate).

(b) Those which have imbibed Bokhara and Samarkand influences. These are made principally by Ersaris settled in the Bokhara Khanate and also sometimes in the localities of Beshir and Chakir, and are frequently known by the former name.

(c) Those which have gone over to the Afghan-Turkoman characteristics in design, retaining, however, Ersari idiosyncrasies. These are made in the south-eastern portion of the Ersari country from about Kizil Ayak to Khoja Salih.

Of these three classes (a) is the true type, whilst (b) and (c) are really hybrids which have become standardised into separate types during the last 150 years.

*Description of Colour Plate.*—The carpet illustrated in colour is one of the old virile Turkoman type made before the Ersaris had sacrificed the purity of their design to neighbouring influences. The main characteristics of these rugs, and one which is well exemplified in this particular carpet, is the division of the field into diamond-shaped panels by a kind of broad trellis-work. A similar broad trellis-pattern is shown in the half-tone illustration (No. 2).

Another feature here clearly shown is the alternation of blues and greens in the colour-scheme, on a ground of rich Turkoman red.

The diamond-shaped panels in the field contain, in this example, octagonal devices formed by joining up the points of

them with a code of ethics as regards the claims and rights of hospitality that is well-nigh irreproachable.

Under Russian suzerainty (since General Skobelev's expedition 1879-81) they have shown themselves amenable to civilisation, and, before the Great War, had largely settled down to agriculture and the more peaceful methods of existence.

Since the Bolsheviks have overrun the country, the tribes are reported to have again taken, to a great extent, to their savage marauding, nomadic life, and great masses of them are said to have been migrating hither and thither, and none can foresee when or where they will eventually come to rest.

The various tribes (khalk) are divided into numerous clans (taife), which in turn are subdivided into family branches (tire), and since not only does each tribe have its main characteristic rug design, but also each subdivision has its own minor differentiation of design, there is naturally a considerable variety of similar rug with variations of interest from a collector's point of view. It is not, however, possible to do more than illustrate one fine example of each of the main types.

## II.—THE ERSARI TURKOMANS

*Ersari.*—The Ersaris are, or were, one of the largest of the Turkoman tribes. They migrated some two and a half centuries ago from the Mangishlak Peninsula, on the north-east coast of the Caspian Sea, to the territory they now occupy along the banks of the Oxus river from Charjui almost to Balkh in Afghanistan. There is also a small colony of Ersaris in the province of Khiva to the north-west of the capital.

Some people regard the various Ersari settlements, *e.g.* at Sakar Bazar, Bourdalik, Chakir, Beshir, Kizil Ayak, Khoja Salih, etc., as distinct minor tribes. However, both ethnographically and from a rug-making point of view, they are better grouped together under the name Ersaris, though some might prefer to group them now under the name of Bokhara Turkomans.

They are now only semi-nomadic, and are practically a settled race which has become sedentary and taken to agriculture. They are less hardy than some of the other Turkoman tribes, and have been tributary to Bokhara for the last hundred years. They are an hospitable people, but have lost with their savage character many of the primitive virtues and characteristics of their kindred tribes.

*Ersari Carpets.*—It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in more recent years the rugs of the Ersaris have varied a good deal from their original pure Turkoman type, and have imbibed much influence both from their Bokhariot neighbours and from the Afghan Turkomans. Indeed it is often difficult to differentiate between a modern Ersari rug with strong Bokhara tendencies and a modern Bokhara rug with strong Ersari influence, so closely do they sometimes approximate. Indeed, the name "Beshir" is often wrongly applied to both types.

As regards the name Beshir, it is often supposed that it refers to Bushire, the port on the Persian Gulf, but of course it has no

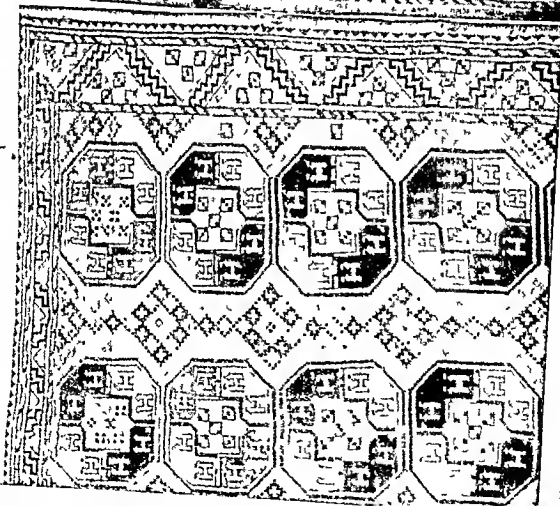
sight-pointed stars. As a minor device within the quarterings of the octagonal figures the trefoil is prominent.

The small triangular tree or flower forms in double rows along the bands forming the trellis are typically Ersari, and in some of their rugs a small repetitive design of this type in close diagonal lines covers the entire field. The main border is the diamond shape in steps which is so common in Yomut and Tekke rugs.

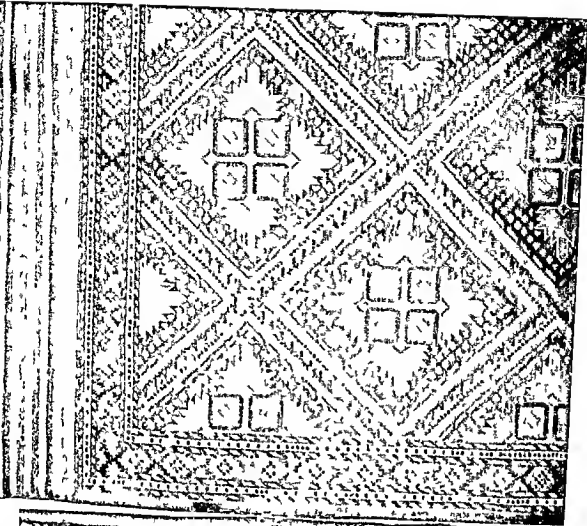
Indeed the true type of Ersari carpet has many features in common with Yomut weaves, showing that there must have been close relationship between these two tribes, probably before their migration south from Mangishlak.

The half-tone illustration (No. 1) shows part of an Ersari rug which has gone over entirely to the general type of Afghan Turkomans, and which was probably woven by the south-eastern section of the Ersaris between Kizil Ayak and Khoja Salih. Here are shown the bold octagons of the Fil-pa containing in their quarterings the H-shaped device commonly found in Saryk Turkoman rugs, which is probably a conventionalised dog formation (*vide* chapter on Design, Fig. 20, page 60). The pattern on the field between the main octagons is, however, distinctly Ersari in character. The main border, too, though not a usual one, is quite an Ersari feature, since the employment of zigzag lines is not uncommon with them (*vide* the Ersari *jowal* illustrated in colour, Fig. 3, opposite page 110).

The half-tone illustration (No. 2) shows part of an Ersari rug of a design in common use in the neighbourhood of Beshir. The device within the diamond-shaped panels consists of four large geometrical flower forms, stem to stem, with the petals



(c) PART OF A RUG WOVEN BY PESARIN IN THE KITHI AREA, SHOWING SECTIONS TO THE LEFT OF HAN TURKOVAN (111)



(d) PART OF AN ERSARI RUG SHOWING A DESIGN COMMONLY USED IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF ERSHIR

Their invariable main field design consists of parallel rows, usually three, of large regular octagons outlined in dark blue on a rich red field, which, in different pieces, varies from blood-red almost to brown.

Top and bottom, these octagons are nearly in contact with each other, and even laterally there is not, as a rule, much space between their sides.

From the size and spacing of these figures, the carpets are known throughout the East as *Fil-pa* or *Pa-i-fil*, meaning Elephant's Foot, the general effect of the pattern being not unlike the track of an elephant.

The octagons are quartered in the usual Turkoman fashion, the diagonally opposite quarterings being filled with orange, blue, or green, and sometimes white. Generally, there is less white in these carpets than in most Turkomans, but otherwise the general colouring is typically Turkoman.

In the variations of the small designs within the octagons, and between them, when the interstices of the field are not left in plain red, as well as in the borders, the influence of practically every Turkoman tribe finds expression in different pieces. In turn, all the common minor designs of each Turkoman tribe—Ersari, Tekke, Salor, Saryk, and Yomut—may be featured, but never to such an extent as to alter the unmistakable character of the *Fil-pa*. The reason for this is that certain of the *Alielis* between *Andkhui* and *Balkh*,<sup>1</sup> certain of the *Kara Turkomans*

<sup>1</sup> *Balkh* is now a city of Afghanistan. It is identical with the ancient *Bactra*. In very early days it was for a long time the central seat of the Zoroastrian religion. It was sacked in 1220 by *Jinghiz Khan*, and again in the 14th century by *Timur*. In 1736 it was conquered by *Nadir Shah*. Later it was for some time subject to the *Khan of Bokhara*, but since 1850 has remained under Afghan rule.

at Kilif and Charshangu, as well as certain of the Ersaris from Kizil Ayak to Khoja Salih, have adopted with variations the general characteristics of the Afghan Turkoman carpets.

Naturally enough these carpets, together with those woven actually in Afghanistan, are the carpets most plentifully obtainable throughout Afghanistan and Northern India, to which country they come in great abundance in the picturesque camel caravans through the frontier passes.

Few real antiques have survived the very rough treatment to which they were frequently subjected in their own country. There, before carpets had become a mere article of merchandise, as they have done in the last fifty years or more, they were, after they had become too filthy even for the Afghan, doubled at the centre over a rope stretched taut across a river or mountain torrent, and left there several days to be washed clean by the current. After this, they would be taken out, dried in the sun, and finally beaten out with bamboos.

It requires very stout material to withstand many such unmerciful treatments. Added to which the Afghan takes but little trouble to keep his rugs free from moths, "woolly bears," and other destructive insects, not to mention more disagreeable denizens; nor does he bother to put in that stitch in time which would not only save mine, but would preserve many a beautiful piece of handicraft eventually to reach more appreciative owners.

The carpet illustrated is a particularly fine specimen of great age, with a warmth of colour that stimulates the eye, and a luxuriousness of pile that suggests repose.

It is a very pure example of its type in so far as it has not, like so many of its kind, accepted the outside influences and



AN ANTIQUE AFGHAN  
TURKOMAN RUG, OR FIL PA

minor designs of other nomad tribes. In the inner quarterings of the octagons of this carpet are seen effulgent stars, which are repeated again in groups of eight in the interstices of the field. The outer quarterings each contain four well-defined trefoil shapes. In the centre of the field, between the octagons, there are two pairs of eight-pointed stars, sometimes called the "Seal of Solomon."

The borders here are very typical, the main border being a conventional geometric design of crosses within diamonds, flanked on the inner and outer sides by narrower borders containing a vine formed by pairs of small cones placed back to back, whilst the extreme outside guard stripe is of the double saw-tooth pattern. Here, too, the alternation of dark blues and dark greens in the pattern is noticeable, as it is in several types of Turkoman rug.

The broad web-ends crossed by narrow stripes of dark blue, and finished by a row of knots and a fringe, are characteristic. The warp of these carpets, and consequently their fringe, is frequently of goat-hair of an unmistakable shade of grey. In all respects of weave, design, and colouring they are thoroughly Turkoman, though never of so fine a texture and seldom of such close-clipped pile as the finest Turkoman rugs.

Truly beautiful old pieces are hard to come by, though this is a very common type of carpet, and the modern product can be bought almost by the acre.

It is curious that the Afghan Turkomans appear to weave few special Ja-i-namaz, or prayer rugs; indeed, they seldom weave small rugs at all, the most common sizes being about  $10\frac{1}{2}$  feet by 6 feet, or else about 9 feet square.

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a very fertile oasis, which is now irrigated by an elaborate system of canals cut from the river.

The oasis has at all times been renowned throughout the East for its fertility. Every kind of cereal and many fruits grow there in abundance. The heat of summer is most oppressive. The least wind raises clouds of fine dust, which fill the air, render it so opaque as to obscure the noonday sun, and make respiration difficult. Snow falls rarely, and when it does, it melts at once. The annual rainfall rarely exceeds 5 inches, and there is often no rain from June to October.

In Hindu (the Puranas), Parsi and Arab tradition, Merv is looked upon as the ancient Paradise, the cradle of the Aryan families of mankind, and so of the human race.

During the Arab dominion, which came to an end in Central Asia in 874, Merv, like Samarkand and Bokhara, was one of the great schools of learning.

In the first half of the 11th century, under the dynasty of the Seljukian Turks, Merv reached the zenith of her glory. It was subsequently overrun by the Turkish tribes of the Ghuzz from beyond the Oxus and eventually passed under the sway of the rulers of Khiva.

In 1221 Merv opened its gates to Tule, son of Jenghiz Khan, who is said to have butchered most of the inhabitants. From this time forward the city began to decay.

In 1380 Merv was included in the possessions of Tamerlane.

In 1505 the city was occupied by the Uzbeks, who five years later were expelled by Ismail Khan, the founder of the Safawid dynasty of Persia. Merv remained in the hands of Persia until 1787, when it was captured by the Emir of Bokhara. Seven

Although the magnificent carpet of the illustration may be taken as the perfect standard of this group, it would nevertheless be possible for a collector to specialise in this one type and to obtain an infinite variety of minor diversities of design, according as the weavers had come in contact with one or other of the nomad Turkoman tribes.

#### IV.—THE SO-CALLED MERV OR PUNJDEH GROUP—SALOR, SARYK AND TEKKE TURKOMANS

*General Remarks.*—The country of these tribes, embracing the Murghab and Tejend rivers with their oases, is noted throughout the world as the cradle of the finest weaves of Central Asia. Since the Salors were the originators amongst the Turkomans of the art of weaving, and the Saryks and Tekkes were their immediate followers, it is natural that these three types have much in common.

Although Turkomans are supposed to have made their first appearance in the country now called Transcaspia as long ago as the 10th century A.D., little is definitely known of their subsequent wanderings and vicissitudes until the early part of the 18th century.

The Salors and Saryks apparently migrated to the south-eastern regions of Transcaspia about 1730, and settled later, about 1795, more or less harmoniously, side by side in the Merv district. However, in 1845 the Salors assisted Mohammed Emin Khan, Emir of Bokhara, temporarily to oust the Saryks.

*Merv.*—The Merv oasis is situated on the northern reaches of the Murghab river, where it breaks up into many channels and loses itself in the eastern end of the Kara Kum desert, thus forming

a very fertile oasis, which is now irrigated by an elaborate system of canals cut from the river.

The oasis has at all times been renowned throughout the East for its fertility. Every kind of cereal and many fruits grow there in abundance. The heat of summer is most oppressive. The least wind raises clouds of fine dust, which fill the air, render it so opaque as to obscure the noonday sun, and make respiration difficult. Snow falls rarely, and when it does, it melts at once.

years later the Bokharans razed the city to the ground, broke down the dams, and converted the district into a waste

The ruins of Old Merv cover an area of over 15 square miles. There have been many cities of Merv, under different names such as Iskander Khan Kīlah, Giaour Kīlah, Sultan Sanjar Kīlah, Abdullah Khan Kīlah, and Bairam Ali Kīlah, each in its turn having been plundered and destroyed. Merv has indeed again been the scene of plundering and looting by Bolsheviks, Afghans, and Turkomans within the last three years.

*Salors and Saryks* —The Salor and Saryk Turkomans were in possession of the oasis, under the suzerainty of Khiva, from about 1795 till 1856, when the fierce and powerful Tekke tribe attacked them and drove them out. The Saryk Turkomans then took up their abode further south, at Yulatan and Punjeh ("Five villages"), on the Murghab river. The Saryks of Punjeh have since been irreconcilable enemies of the Merv Tekkes.

The Salors, after the onslaught of the Tekkes at Merv, became split up, and are now found scattered about almost all over this part of Turkestan. Some took up their quarters to the south of the Saryks, on the Murghab river, round Maruchak, some remained with the Saryks at Punjeh, about 700 families continued to live near Merv, where they associated with the Otamish Tekkes, a considerable number is found amongst the Ersaris, and a great many families settled in the Persian territory of Sarakhs and at Zurabad near the Heri rud. The large majority of the tribe is now divided between Maruchak and Sarakhs.

The Salors are the oldest Turkoman tribe recorded in history, they were already renowned for their bravery at the time of the Arabian occupation. Their hardy, roving life and constant

fighting had kept down their numbers to such an extent that, even in conjunction with the Saryks, they were no match for the Tekkes.

*Saryk Rug.*—The plate shows first a grand old example of a Saryk Turkoman rug of the early 18th century. Of all Turkoman rugs this type may perhaps be the most correctly classified as "Punjdeh," but, as previously explained, the classification of Turkoman rugs according to districts is apt to be misleading, and it is better that they should be known by the name of the tribe which makes them.

Punjdeh is a comparatively small village and district, the name of which became familiar to Englishmen principally because it was there that, in 1885, there occurred a collision between Afghan and Russian troops, which nearly resulted in war between England and Russia.

The most characteristic feature of the Saryk rugs is the octagon, regular in outline and usually of an elongated lozenge shape, regularly spaced in vertical rows, generally three, on a rich red field, the most favoured colour of which is the red of butcher's meat and is called "meat-colour," or "liver-colour," by the natives. Some variation of the octagon is found as the prominent design in the weaves of each of the Merv or Punjdeh group.

In this Saryk rug the octagons are quartered in alternate ivory white and deep orange and contain in their centres another, almost rectangular, geometric figure enclosing a conventionalised cross shape which probably was originally a seal or signet. Each of the outer quarterings of the octagons contains two H-shaped figures which are conventionalised dog formations (*vide* chapter on



Design, Fig. 20, page 60), but are sometimes said to represent a portion of a camel's trappings.

In the spaces between the octagons appear diamond-shaped designs similar to those sometimes seen in other Turkoman weaves, notably in those of the Tekkes.

About the centre of the field there is a variety of fortuitous little designs, interjected, as it were, to mar the absolute symmetry and perfection of design. These were, no doubt, inserted with the object of averting the Evil Eye.

The border shows similarity to certain Caucasian patterns and is of a style, with its heavy latch-hooked vine, which also finds favour amongst the Yomuts.

The rich subdued colouring of this rug is superb, and is enhanced by a curious effect as of haze or smoke over the whole surface. This is partly the result of the sheen given off by its beautiful wool and partly the mellowing influence of time on the rich dyes. The shape of this rug, almost square, about 9 feet by 8 feet, was more common amongst the antiques than amongst modern rugs, which are more usually about 10 feet by 6 feet. The stitch is very fine in the Persian knot, and the carpet is very supple and like velvet to the touch.

These rugs are sometimes quite erroneously called "Khivas," and sometimes also they are referred to as "Camel-foot" rugs, presumably in contradistinction to the "Fil-pa," or Elephant-foot rugs of the Afghan Turkomans.

*Salor Rug.*—The other illustration of the plate shows a unique little piece of the Salor Turkomans, probably dating back to the middle of the 18th century.

The stitch is extremely fine, there being about 450 knots to

the square inch, and the pile is very close-clipped, thus throwing all the detail of the design into very clear definition.

In this type the main octagons are regular in shape but their perimeter is defined by a sort of "zariba." In fact, the general effect of each octagon is that of an entrenched camp with a defensive perimeter and a central "keep."

These main octagons are not quartered, but other irregular octagonal forms which are quartered are seen in the spaces between, and in the centres of, the main octagons. These subsidiary octagon forms closely resemble those found as the main octagons of certain Tekke rugs.

The ground of the field is in reality almost a plum colour, and time has imparted to it that inimitable "bloom" which is the distinction of a venerable old age in rugs, and is as attractive an asset as the bloom of youth in human beings. The panels of the main octagons are in a deep orange or flame colour.

The borders surrounding the field are of conventional geometric designs common to many of the Turkoman weaves, but the little dentured guard stripes are of a pattern almost peculiar to the Salors, though occasionally it is copied by the Tekkes and by the Yomuts. At each end there is a broad outer border decorated with a herring-bone design forming diamond shapes. This design, too, is frequently featured in Tekke and sometimes in Yomut rugs.

This type of rug of the Salor Turkomans is very popular amongst the Afghans, and in the houses of their Khans beautiful specimens may be seen, together with the more common "Fil-pa" and a variety of Persian rugs. It is a great pity that a large proportion of the Salor tribe after their defeat by the Tekkes and

their retirement to Sarakhs and Zurabad in Persian territory in 1857 ceased to produce carpets, for the excellent reason that the Persian Khans seized without payment every rug they made.

Sad to relate, these rugs, together with most others of the Turkoman tribes, have during the last forty years gradually succumbed to the lure of cheap chemical dyes—a deplorable fact, which, however, enhances by contrast the value and beauty of the antiques.

*Tekke Turkomans.*—The Tekke Turkomans were the greatest and most powerful of all the nomad Turkoman tribes of Transcaspia. As raiders and marauders they were dreaded throughout the length and breadth of Transcaspia, and in the borders of Persia, as far as Herat in Afghanistan.

They were driven out of Mangishlak in 1718 by the Kalmuks and commenced their invasion into their present territory early in the 18th century, driving out those Yomuts who were in possession of the country round about Kizil Arvat.

The Akhal Tekkes took possession of the territory they still occupy, though not with the exact present boundaries. It was only about 1812 when they took Askhabad.

The Merv Tekkes settled at first round the Tejend swamps, which appeared to be a desirable country, owing to the abundance of water; but later, about 1834, owing to the unhealthy nature of the soil and to successive years of drought, they abandoned the Tejend swamp country and moved to the Persian territory of Sarakhs (Syrinx), which they held till 1855.

In 1855–56 they were attacked by the Persians and driven out of Sarakhs, when they in turn attacked the Saryks and Salors in

the Merv oasis, where they had been since about 1795, and drove them out.

The Tekkes maintained themselves in Merv against all attacks until in 1883-84 Merv was taken by the Russians, who did not, however, drive out the Tekkes.

At Merv the Tekkes again split up into two large subdivisions—Toktamish (East) and Otamish (West).

*Central Asian Railway.*—It was because the Tekkes were such a constant scourge throughout Transcaspia that the Russians, in 1879-81, undertook a campaign under command of General Skobelev for their subjugation. For the successful prosecution of this campaign, the Russians, in 1880, started what is now the Central Asian railway system, which runs from Krasnovodsk, on the Caspian Sea, through Kizil Arvat, Askhabad, Merv, Charjui to Bokhara and Samarkand, there connecting up with the Orenberg-Tashkent-Samarkand line. There is also an extension from Merv to Khushk Post on the Afghan frontier. At first the line from Krasnovodsk only went as far as Kizil Arvat. In 1881, General Skobelev smashed the Tekke Turkomans at Geok Tepe, their principal fortress, where he took a terrible vengeance on the garrison, which is said to have numbered some 33,000 men and 7000 women and children. The railway now passes through this place, which just before the Great War was a peaceful, settled little town.

By the end of 1885 the line was prolonged to Askhabad, and thence by the end of 1886 through Merv to Charjui, on the River Oxus, thence on to Bokhara and Samarkand, at which place it was completed in 1888.

*Tekke Rugs.*—The rugs woven by the women-folk of the fierce

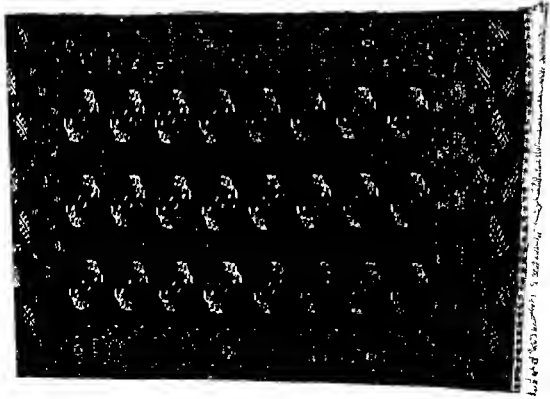
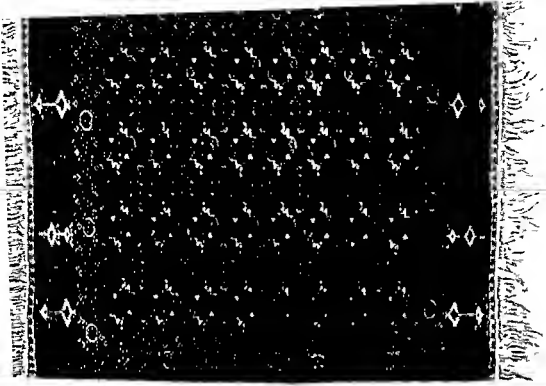
and hardy Tekkes were amongst the finest of the Turkoman weaves; indeed, the best of them are unsurpassed in fineness, quality of material, colouring, and workmanship by any of the weaves of the Orient.

These are the rugs which are known to Americans and in the trade by the fanciful name of "Royal Bokharas." They are also frequently, and with more reason, called "Merv" rugs, though it is only within the last three-quarters of a century that they could lay any claim to that name.

Unfortunately, the progress of the railway, above described, and the opening up of the country, have had a disastrous effect on the weaving industry, since the modern product is too patently turned out as merchandise, the standard of quality having been lowered by the importation of cheap chemical dyes and by hasty production for market purposes.

*Description of Colour Plates.*—The plate illustrates two very perfect specimens, differing slightly in design. These are the two main types of this tribe, which has clung very faithfully to its traditional designs for centuries without variation, except that the more western Tekkes of the Askhabad and Kizil Arvat areas have, more latterly, to the detriment of their original designs, been much influenced by the greater variety introduced by their Yomut neighbours.

Both rugs are very finely woven, each having over 400 knots to the square inch, and both are made of pure pashm, or undergrowth of wool. They are woven so finely and of such firm texture that it is difficult to pass even a needle through their backs, and the rather short pile is so densely packed that it is hard to separate it down to the warp and woof with the thumb-nail.



TWO TLKKE TURKMAN RUGS, ABOUT 100 YEARS OLD

Both rugs are over one hundred years old, and are of the small kind so very exquisitely made as dower rugs for the bride to take with her on her marriage. They are faultless in design, colouring, material, and execution, and their condition testifies to the care with which they have been preserved.

As usual, a form of octagon is the main motif in the field, the colour of which varies in different pieces from blood red to a deep liver colour. The octagonal forms are irregular in outline in these Tekke rugs—that is to say, they are indented on four faces, but they are regularly spaced in vertical and horizontal rows on the field. They are quartered in the customary way in ivory white and red.

A comparison of the two illustrations will show that the quarterings of the octagons contain, in one type, crude leaf forms, variations of the trefoil, and in the other type geometric projections, whilst both types contain that conventionalised figure, supposed to represent the head and neck of a bustard (*vide* chapter on Design, Fig. 19, page 60).

Apart from the details of their minor designs, the differences of which can more readily be appreciated from the plates than from a description in the text, the most distinguishing feature is that straight lines in dark blue run from end to end and from side to side of the field, intersecting at the centres of the octagons and dividing the field into regular rectangles, in one type, but are omitted from the other.

In both types there are in the spaces between the octagons diamond-shaped designs similar to those found in Saryk Turkoman rugs, and which show a certain affinity to the diamond shapes which constitute the main field design of certain Yomut rugs.

The octagons of the smaller of these two rugs are of the type often found between the main octagons of the Salor Turkomans.

The side borders contain a variety of small geometric designs, prolific in detail, and it is here that latitude is given to the individual conceits of the weavers.

The end borders differ from, and are deeper than, the side borders. The one rug shows a herring-bone design of latch-hook in diamond formation, and the other conventionalised forms of the



## AFGHAN RUGS

the Tekkes, are of the Afghan Turkoman type (*vide text*, o. Afghan Turkoman carpets, page 83).

### V.—THE YOMUT TURKOMANS AND KINDRED TRIBES

*General Remarks.*—The Yomuts are a large but rather scattered tribe, a large portion of which was ousted by the Tekkes in the latter half of the 18th century from the fertile country round Zhetysay. They have since been divided into two main elements. One, the southern group, settled in the country on the south-east shores of the Caspian Sea, about the lower reaches of the Gorgehen and Atrak rivers. With this group may be classed two kindred tribes, (1) the Ogourdjalis, who inhabit the Caspian shore from about the mouth of the Atrak river as far north as the Great Balkan mountains, including the islands of Kizilirmak and Ogurchinski: this is a sedentary tribe, inhabiting houses, not tents; and (2) the small tribe of Goklans inhabiting the upper reaches of the Gorgehen, Atrak and Sumbar rivers in the Persian province of Astarabad: this tribe is almost entirely engaged in agricultural pursuits and has the reputation of being the most civilised and hospitable tribe of the Turkomans. The Goklans, however, make no piled rugs, but only weave *khelms*.

The other, the northern group, settled in and around the province of Khiva, mostly to the north-west of the capital. With this group may be classed three kindred tribes: (1) the Chaudors who for the most part inhabit the Ust Urt Plateau between the mouth of the Aral Sea and the Kara Boghaz Gulf on the Caspian Sea; (2) and (3) the Ikdyrs and Abdals, who are small tribes of the Mangishlak district on the Caspian coast as far north as Por Alexandrovsk.

In addition to the above tribes a large colony of about 50,000 Karakalpaks ("Black bonnets"), a Turki tribe living in the delta of the Oxus, south-east of the Aral Sea, also weave a certain number of carpets of Yomut type. These rugs are but copies and comparatively few in number, and do not in any way constitute a separate type.

*Khiva*.—Khiva was formerly an important kingdom of Asia, but is now a much-reduced khanate in complete subjection to and dependent upon Russia, who, after several earlier abortive attempts, organised in 1872 a strong and successful expedition for its occupation under General Kaufman. The Russians annexed all the territory on the right bank of the Oxus and crippled the finances of the khanate by the imposition of a heavy war indemnity. Incidentally the Russians liberated nearly 30,000 Persian slaves.

The oasis of Khiva is very fertile owing to the water of the Oxus, which is brought there by a number of irrigation canals, and to the layer of ooze which it deposits. Its houses, amidst trees and flourishing fields, are a welcome contrast to the arid deserts which surround it.

Uzbeks are the dominant race, the remainder of the population consisting of Sarts, Tajiks, Karakalpaks, Khirghiz and Turkomans.

Khiva oasis was seized by the Arabs in A.D. 680. Mahmud of Ghazni took it in 1017, and later it fell into the power of the Seljuk Turks.

By the commencement of the 13th century it had conquered Persia, when in 1219 Jenghiz Khan appeared. Khiva was again conquered by Timour in 1379, and finally fell under the rule of the Uzbeks in 1512.

*Yomut Rugs.*—The rugs and carpets produced by the Yomuts and their kindred tribes are considerable both in quantity and in merit, but it is not possible to draw hard-and-fast dividing lines between the various offshoots from the parent type.

A fair proportion of these rugs is produced actually in the Khanate of Khiva, but, since an equal number, if not more, of identically the same type, are produced in districts which are at considerable distances away from the khanate, the name *Khiva* is not a wholly appropriate one for this group.

Yomut rugs show distinct Caucasian influence, as might be expected from the geographical location of the tribes immediately east of the Caspian Sea. This influence is especially noticeable in respect of the brighter colours introduced, usually in minor quantities of turquoise blue and green, and in the frequent use of the latch-hook both in the borders and in the field.

Diverse influences, especially Caucasian and latterly perhaps Russian, have greatly affected the designs of these tribes; they are no longer so pure as those of the so-called "Merv" or "Punjdeh" group, and show greater variety of design and less fidelity to type than those of the other Turkomans, not excepting the Ersaris, who are also offenders in this respect.

Their fabrics are, however, purely Turkoman in all respects of weave, finish, material, design and general colour scheme. Occasionally a piece may be found woven in the Turkish knot, but this is exceptional.

As regards design, the most distinctive characteristic of Yomut rugs, differentiating them from the majority of other Turkoman rugs, is the substitution of diamond-shaped designs for the more usual octagon. Sometimes, especially in their more modern

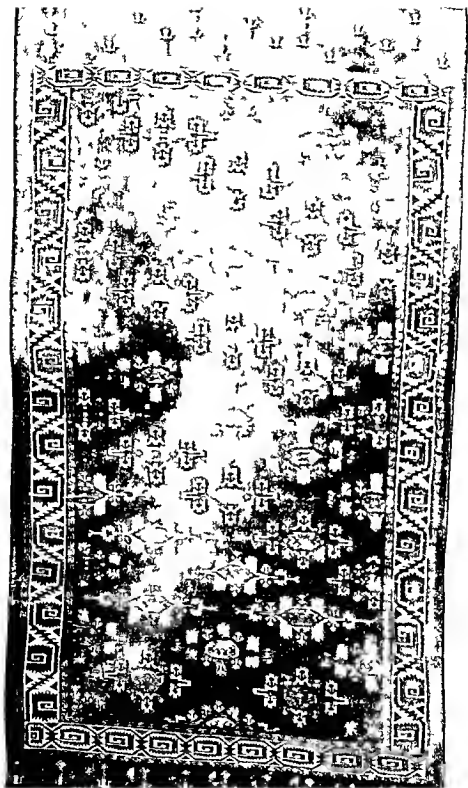
efforts, the Yomuts go in for field figures of very complicated outline (*vide* illustrations of Yomut *guls* in the chapter on Design, Figs. 38-41, page 64).

These rugs used formerly to come in considerable numbers from Khiva via Orenburg to Moscow, and from Krasnovodsk across the Caspian to Constantinople; but just as these tribes were the earliest and most easily accessible of the Turkomans, so the fine old specimens were soonest extracted from the country, and the modern output is very inferior. It is these carpets which may more legitimately be called "Khivas" than many others which bear the name.

It is interesting to note the points of similarity and kinship between these Yomut carpets and the true type of the Ersari Turkomans, showing there must have been close connection between the Yomuts and the Ersaris before the latter migrated from the Mangishlak district to their present territory. Both groups use diamond formations for their main design, both are addicted to the alternation of dark blue and green in their colour schemes, and both employ a primitive little flower form in their minor decoration.

*Description of Plate.*—The plate shows an extremely interesting rug of early 18th century date which is a pure Yomut type, of exceedingly fine quality and in excellent preservation.

In this example the diamond shapes, quartered in dark blue and green, which cover the rich red field in regular diagonal rows, are surrounded by latch-hooks; they contain at their centres smaller quartered diamonds, and in their outer quarterings are small flower forms, somewhat resembling anchors, which in reality are flowers with a leaf or bud on each side of their stems. These



flower forms are sometimes more elaborate than the rather primitive ones of the illustration, in which they are reduced to little more than "broad arrows."

The swaying vine edged with latch-hooks, in red on an ivory ground, of the main border, is characteristic, and in this rug takes a particularly pleasing form. There is something bolder and finer in its design than is usually seen. The exceptional breadth of its ivory ground is toned into harmony with the field by an immense amount of detail in red, thus detracting from what would otherwise be an overpowering effect of white.

The secondary borders, with guard stripes of the barber's-pole design, are of an unusually elaborate reciprocal flower form in blues and greens alternating with rose colour.

The broad piled ends beyond the field borders contain each a row of elongated hexagonal plaques, in which the quartered diamond in strings of four again makes its appearance.

An interesting feature, again showing Caucasian influence, is the row of tiny sheep-dogs which is seen immediately above the top field border. They also appear here and there in the spaces of the field between the diamond shapes. Animal life is seldom represented by Sunni Mohammedan weavers, but the guardians of their flocks and tents have here been permitted to become an honoured exception.

*Half-tone Illustration.*—The rug illustrated in half-tone is another fine old specimen of a pure Yomut type in which the characteristic diamond formations, symmetrically spaced in diagonal rows on the deep red field, are of an even more elaborate nature than those of the rug illustrated in colour. Here the diamond formations consist of a number of small panels surround-

ing a hexagonal or octagonal form at their centres. Each small panel contains that little anchor-shaped flower form so common in Yomut weaves.

The main border is a fine bold design which is frequently associated with and probably originated with the Saryks, and on either side are guard stripes of running latch-hooks.

The broad piled continuations at each end of the rug contain an unusual but attractive design, but it is not clear what it is intended to represent.

*Chaudor Design.*—Another common design, found in the rugs made by the Chaudors, who may be regarded from the rug-making point of view as a Yomut subdivision, is seen in the *torba*, illustrated in colour, opposite page 110, Fig. 1.

In this *torba* the Chaudor field design is only shown in half *guls*, the complete *gul* being of quasi-diamond formation (*vide* chapter on Design, Fig. 39, page 64).

*A Yomut Turkoman Portière.*—Amongst all the Turkoman tribes it is a common practice to hang a rug as a *portière* at the entrance to their tents, but it is not always the case that these rugs are of a distinct type specially woven for the purpose. Often a small-sized rug of the customary tribal pattern was utilised for the purpose, but more frequently an ordinary prayer rug, being especially suitable as regards size and shape, was dedicated to this use, and this possibly explains why the true nomad Turkoman prayer rug is finished at the top end by hemming back the web and working a braided selvedge along it instead of the usual finish of a web end with a row of knots and a fringe.

The rug illustrated in the frontispiece is a fine example of one specially woven for this particular purpose. It is of Yomut

manufacture, and in design and colouring very typical of the work of that tribe. The design is based on that of a prayer rug—*i. e.* it is of the "Khatchli" pattern, with the field divided into four sections by broad vertical and horizontal cross bands, but, since it was intended as a *portière*, the mihrab, or prayer niche, has been omitted. Stout woollen ropes for the purpose of suspending the rug may be seen hanging down from each top corner. Similar ropes, or sometimes merely loops, may now and then be found at the corners of larger-sized carpets, in which case, of course, they are intended only as a convenience in moving the rug from place to place, and not for suspending it.

As is usual in Yomut rugs, the main field devices are diamond-shaped, with serrated edges, and are arranged in regular parallel diagonal rows throughout the four sections of the field. Similar devices, but slightly different, carry on the scheme in the borders and in the crossbands. These latter devices are of a type which is also commonly found in certain Tekke products, especially prayer rugs, woven in the Askhabad district. Indeed, it will be often noticed that the rugs of the more westerly sections of the Tekke Turkomans have much in common with those of the Yomuts, since these two tribes are in close contact in these parts, and, especially of latter years, there has been much borrowing and copying of minor designs between the two tribes.

The broad piled continuations at each end of the rug beyond the field borders contain a curious and very striking arabesque design. Conspicuous here is that beautiful turquoise blue which is rarely found in other Turkoman rugs. The origin and meaning of this design is obscure. It is supposed by some to be a conventionalised form of a planing seagull with outspread



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and were not in any sense an Afghan product, though bearing an Afghan name.

Fourthly, to make confusion worse confounded, this type of rug is, both in the east and in the west, frequently called "Turkomani," whereas, strictly speaking, it is not Turkoman at all, though there are several points of kinship between the two groups.

Fifthly, there is amongst Eastern dealers a sort of generic term for all the several varieties of the group. This term is "Siyah-kar," which means "dark work," and refers to their general colouring, which is usually very sombre and gloomy—dark blues, dull reds, and browns predominating.

The finest carpets of this type are those made in the Adraskand valley, which is a narrow gorge running roughly east and west, about forty miles south of the city of Herat. These carpets are not infrequently less sombre than the other subdivisions.

Another subdivision is known as "Sabzwar," being woven in the province of that name south of Herat.<sup>1</sup> Here, again, a minor

<sup>1</sup> Herat is a very ancient city of great historical interest. It has played a conspicuous part in practically every dynastic revolution, foreign invasion, or great civil war, in Central Asia, since the time of the Prophet.

In the reign of Sultan Sanjar of Merv, about 1157, the city was entirely destroyed by an irruption of the Ghuzz, the predecessors, in race as well as in habitat, of the Turkomans. In 1232 Jenghiz Khan captured the city and massacred the inhabitants, and Timur repeated the procedure in 1398. However, under the princes of the house of Timur, Herat rapidly again became flourishing and populous, and the favoured seat of the art and literature of the East. During the centuries which intervened between the Timuride princes and the rise of the Afghan power, about the middle of the 18th century, Herat was sacked four times by Turkomans and Uzbeks, and it has never in modern times attained to anything like its old importance.

The city wall, 25 feet high and 14 feet thick at the base, is the crown to a stupendous earthwork averaging 50 feet high and 250 feet wide at the base, supported by 150 semicircular towers, and further protected by a ditch 45 feet wide and 16 feet deep.

wings. That suggestion, however, does not commend itself to others, who see in this very peculiar design strong Mongolian influence, and a resemblance to the sea, cloud and mountain effects often seen in Chinese weaves. Both in colour and in form the design readily suggests the blue waves of the Caspian Sea playing up the creeks of an indented coast line.

## VI.—SOUTH-WESTERN AFGHANISTAN GROUP

The carpets of Afghanistan, apart from those of the Afghan Turkomans, are, together with those of Beluchistan, in a group by themselves, and in dealing with this group of rugs there are several stumbling-blocks of nomenclature to confuse the uninitiated.

Firstly, the class of carpet most generally called "Afghan" at the present time is the Afghan Turkoman, or "Fil-pa."

Secondly, this group of rugs, the majority of which are woven in the country south of Herat, in the province of that name, as far east as Kandahar, and as far south as Beluchistan, is often quite properly referred to as "Herati."

Thirdly, it must be realised that this quite appropriate name, "Herati," is apt to confound the unwary, in so far as these rugs bear neither resemblance nor relationship to the ancient Herati rugs with the well-known design of that name. The latter are purely Persian in every characteristic, being indeed woven by Persians in Herat at the time when that city was a part of the Persian Empire, and later being made actually in the Persian province of Khorassan. Similarly the so-called "Kabul" rugs were woven entirely by Persian artisans at Kabul in years gone by,

and were not in any sense an Afghan product, though bearing an Afghan name.

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confusion is introduced by the fact that the word "Sabzwar" means "green coloured," and, consequently, native dealers often wrongly group together and classify as Sabzwar all such carpets of this type as contain a considerable quantity of dark green. Of these there is a fair proportion.

There are further subdivisions gradually merging into the Beluchistan proper, which is a similar type.

The characteristic field patterns of these rugs may roughly be divided into two main categories—(a) those containing large geometric figures, ill-defined octagons, and crude Trees of Life, (b) those containing a regular repetitive design throughout the field, such as a diamond or eight-petalled rosette formation, generally profusely surrounded by latch-hooks.

The main border is commonly of a rectilinear floral nature, the edges of the design being frequently picked out in white. This is flanked on either side by secondary borders of formal geometric design, whilst the guard stripes are often the "running latch hook" or the so-called "reciprocal trefoil." These border designs, together with the very common use of the latch hook and of the octagonal disc (*vide* chapter on Design, Fig 1, page 60) in the field, are curiously Caucasian in feeling.


It is not uncommon to find prayer rugs, and sometimes other small rugs, which depart in colour scheme from the usual sombre tones to the extent of employing a natural camel-hair or fawn colour in the field. This is a not unwelcome relief from the customary dull reds and deep blues toning to purple, together with an often extensive use of dark green or brown.

The carpet illustrated is an exceptionally beautiful fabric from the Adraskand valley, dating back to the 18th century. Of

AN ADRASKAND CARPET  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

unusual size, exquisite workmanship, and skilfully drawn design in a wealth of colour seldom met with in these rugs, it was obviously made to the special order of some wealthy potentate, probably as a Durbar carpet. A field of deep translucent blue, edged round with a large running latch-hook, is the background for an all-over repetitive design of eight-petalled rosettes within diamond formations, each surrounded by small latch-hooks, the colour-scheme of which is in varied shades of red, blue, saffron, and flame colour. Good as the plate is, it has failed on this small scale to reproduce adequately the beauty of the chromatics.

It will be noticed that rather than have any incomplete portions of this repetitive design at the edges of the field, the spaces have instead been filled in, according to the weaver's fancy, with a number of small devices, amongst which are included conventional floral designs and small octagonal discs containing eight-pointed stars.

The main and secondary borders, with their guard stripes, showing distinct Caucasian feeling, are typical of this group of rugs, and are in perfect harmony with the field. Very small in the main border can be detected the  shaped symbol of religious significance, connected by origin with sun-worship, which occurs in many of the Central Asian rugs (*vide* chapter on Design, Fig. 3, page 60).

This carpet must, like all of its kind, have originally had broad web-ends, coloured in consonance with the field.

These carpets of Southern Afghanistan are very plentiful, usually of good dyes and material, stout in texture and durable, but withal unattractive because of their too sombre colouring. Did these people but produce more carpets like the rarely fine

example illustrated, there would be a readier market for their wares.

## VII.—MINOR FABRICS OF THE TURKOMANS

No treatise on Turkoman weaves would be complete without mention of those woven fabrics, other than rugs, which are part and parcel of the daily life of these people. Apart, then, from carpets, prayer rugs, and *portières*, all of which may be considered as rugs, the Turkomans weave for themselves, in a similar manner, various other commodities which serve most useful, as well as decorative, purposes in their tents and on "trek." Commonest of these are (1) the *daur-i-khirkah*, which runs like a great belt round the entire outside circumference of the tent, keeping the walls braced and the entrance closed, if necessary; (2) the ornamental door-head or door-surround; (3) the *jowal*, or camel-bag; (4) the *kharjin* ("ass saddle"), a large double saddle-bag to sling over the pack-saddle of ass or horse; (5) the *torba*, or small bag for use as a wallet or pillow-bag.

The dome-shaped tents of the Turkomans, rather like large beehives, merit some description to enable one to visualise their picturesqueness when fully equipped with their carpets and their other woven hangings and decorations. These tents, which are called *aladjak* in Kirghiz, *cu* in Turkoman, and *kibitka* in Russian, are about 15 feet in diameter, 11 feet high at the centre, with their walls vertical to a height of about 6 feet. Over a light collapsible wooden framework is stretched a kind of thick felt. Cross-ropes passing over the roof secure the whole, which is in addition picketed to the ground. Except for the wooden framework, the tents are constructed by the women,



who also attend to their erection or dismantling whenever the encampment has to move, which is fairly frequently. It takes about an hour only to pack a tent with all its contents on to two camels, and it can be unpacked and pitched again in about the same time.

The vertical walls are composed of four arcs, each a quarter circle, made of rods about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter, forming an open lattice-work, crossing each other at intervals of 8 inches, and sloping at an angle of  $45^\circ$  with the ground. Dried "gut" of a sheep is used to bind the rods, which are pierced for the purpose at the points of intersection. Closed up, these four lattice-work arcs can easily be packed on one camel.

Cords of plaited camel's-hair are used to lash the four arcs together when they have been expanded and placed in the form of a circle where the tent is to be pitched. This done, the women place on a pole and hoist to the necessary height in the centre of the enclosure the wooden wheel-like contrivance, some 6 feet in diameter, which forms the summit of the dome. Several women then simultaneously insert the upper ends of the curved wooden rods, which form the framework of the roof, into the holes in the circumference of the wheel, and lash the lower ends to the lattice-work walls. The tent at this stage resembles a big parrot's cage. Sheets of felt are next suspended outside the walls, and enclosed in turn by reed matting. The roof is covered with felt only, the central aperture, which is the only means of light or ventilation besides the door, being provided with a kind of felt hood with cords attached for opening or closing it.

The fire occupies the centre of the tent under the aperture. The half of the floor furthest from the door is covered with a

thick felt carpet, called *ketche* or *kochma*, on which are laid the finer rugs, upon which the inmates sit by day and sleep by night. The semicircle nearest the door is bare earth or sand, and is used for cooking, chopping wood, and other rough domestic purpose. Such is the true setting of the beautiful rugs; saddle-bags, and other woven fabrics of the Turkomans.

The *jowals*; or large camel-bags, are usually woven in pairs, each some 4 or 5 feet in length by 3 to 3½ feet in depth, to sling on each side of a camel for the purpose of carrying household goods, cooking utensils, merchandise, and so on. In camp, the *jowals*, as well as the smaller kinds of bags, are hung round the walls inside the tent, where they form an admirable tapestry in addition to being convenient receptacles for goods and chattels. In their original condition they consist of a piled outer surface and a stout unpiled backing, which is formed by the continuation of warp and weft stoutly woven to the texture of strong canvas, doubled back behind the piled surface, and strongly attached up the sides so as to form a large bag. As a rule, these canvas backs are removed when or before they come to Western markets, the front piled surface alone being used in the form of a hearth-rug. Each and every Turkoman tribe makes and uses these *jowals*, of which the colour-schemes and general characteristics correspond to those of the carpets of the tribe by which they are made, so that it is as a rule easy to classify them accordingly. It is to be noted that the *jowals* of the Yomut tribes depart from the more ordinary rectangular shape, and are frequently pentagonal, hexagonal, or heptagonal.

Somewhat similar are the smaller *kharjin*, or donkey saddle-bags, but whereas the *jowals* are made each of a pair separate,

the *kharjin* is more frequently made with the two bags all in one piece, ready to sling over the pack donkey's back, so that one bag hangs down each side. The web back is made proportionately longer than the depth of both bags, to allow of its passing over the saddle-tree in the centre. Each bag has usually a double series of goat's-hair loops along its upper edge, for the purpose of lacing it up with a kind of chain-stitch when full. These, too, very often come to the Western markets separately and without their backs, and are of a size and shape that is convenient for upholstering the seats of chairs or to serve as cushion-covers or door-mats. Frequently these *kharjin* have the front surface only partially, instead of completely, piled, *i. e.* the bottom portion of each bag for about 4 or 5 inches, the remainder being decorated in the *khelim*-stitch. The decorative work of this unpiled portion is often very fine, but is usually confined to simple designs, such as diamonds, latch-hooks, etc., in parallel rows. Similarly the centre portion of the web back which shows between the two bags is woven in a variegated geometric pattern in colours.

*Khelims*, which are pileless woven rugs, are undoubtedly the prototype of the more elaborate piled carpets. They are, however, still made in great numbers by all the tribes, being less costly in material and labour than piled rugs. It is obvious from their process of manufacture that they do not lend themselves to such variety or elaboration of design as can be obtained in a piled rug, and, moreover, their smooth surfaces cannot produce the lustrous colour-tones which are the natural accompaniment of a piled surface, although identically the same dyes may have been used in the two varieties. The design is ordinarily confined to some

simple geometric and repetitive device in parallel horizontal rows.

Certain small tribes, amongst whom the art of rug-making is but little developed, confine their weaving entirely to *khelims*, and make no piled carpets. Such are the Goklans, a subdivision of the Yomuts, inhabiting the country between the Gorghen and Atrak rivers, and also a small tribe of Arab origin located at Deh-nao, in Bokhara.

The *khelims* of some tribes, and those made in South-Western Afghanistan, are often in two pieces, strongly joined together longitudinally down the centre, and these may be of considerably larger size than those made in a single piece.

There is a third kind of bag, called *torba*, which serves either as a pillow-bag or a wallet. It is usually only about 12 to 8 inches in depth by 2 to 3 feet in length, and, being frequently of extremely fine workmanship, makes an excellent pillow cushion or a couch or settee.

The *daur-t-khirgah*, or tent bands, are exceedingly decorative, but their great length, of about 45 feet, with a width of only 5 to 18 inches, precludes their use in a Western home except in the manner of a frieze. As a rule, they differ from all the other woven fabrics of the Turkomans, in so far as the designs only are worked with a piled surface upon a plain dirty-white web background. These designs, finely executed, sometimes depart from the customary formal rectilinear devices and depict animals or dogs. They are also sometimes woven entirely in the *khelim*-stitch. These tent-bands make a fascinating and picturesque finish to the otherwise colourless exteriors of the beehive dwellings of the nomads.

The door-frame decorations, too, are often very attractive, and,

in addition to their fine colouring, are ornamented with deep woollen fringes and tasselled cords.

The coloured plate shows:—(a) A very ancient Yomut Turkoman *torba*, or pillow-bag, of such fine texture, material, and colouring that, were it only of carpet size, it would be invaluable. This piece is probably the work of the Chaudors (Yomuts) of the province of Khiva. (b) An Ersari *kharjin*, which is a good old one, and has been selected for illustration because it exemplifies no less than five different kinds of work—(1) the piled surface at the base of each bag; (2) the *khelim*-stitch, forming the major portion of each bag; (3) the centre portion, flat woven in various coloured plaques; (4) the work in goat's-hair of the lacing-up loops and side finish; (5) the plain web back. (c) An Ersari *jowal*. It will be noticed that the border of this *jowal* is precisely the same as that of the *kharjin* above. There are also illustrated, in black and white, sketches of a section representing about 4 feet of a Tekke Turkoman tent-band, and one-half of a Saryk Turkoman door ornament.

It is amongst the smaller pieces, such as *jowals*, *torbas*, and dower-rugs, that one finds the very finest workmanship. The Turkoman mother weaves, with infinite patience, toil, and care, such *jowals* and *torbas* as are intended later to contain her daughter's dowry, or *trousseau*, so to speak, and one can imagine with what pride the girls themselves fashion to the utmost of their skill the rugs which are to form part of their marriage portion, and to be to their husbands the criterion of their industry and skill. Little wonder that these small pieces, which play such an intimate rôle in the family life, are finer wrought than the larger carpets intended for ordinary domestic use!

It is worthy of note that the Salors, Saryks, and Tekkes frequently work some of their minor designs in silk in these *jowals* and *torbas*, but that the Yomuts do not do so.

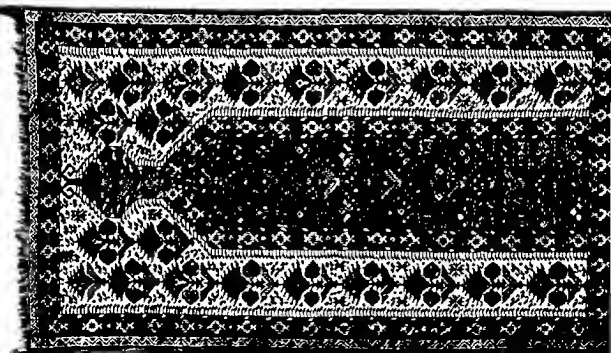
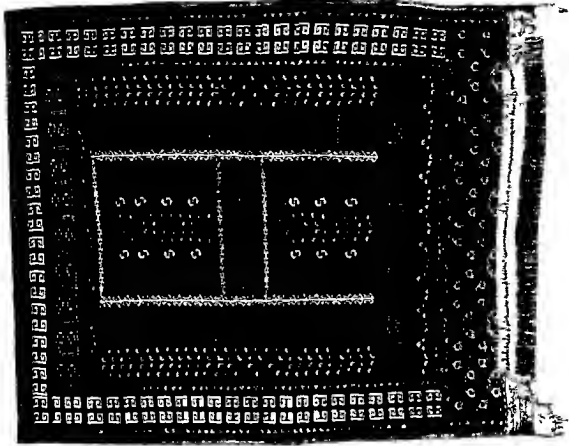
### VIII.—PRAYER RUGS

All Mohammedan weavers of rugs make a certain number of rugs specially destined for the sole purpose of places of prayer.

Just as in every mosque there is a niche, called a *mihrab*, which indicates the direction of Mecca, towards which the Moslems turn when praying, so into the design of his prayer rugs (*Ja-t-nimaz*) the Moslem weaves a niche or *mihrab* at one end.

Throughout the Orient in different countries and districts these *mihrabs* assume an infinite variety of shapes, but amongst the group of rugs here considered there are only four variations to note: (1) the small, flat, tent-shaped niche common to all the true Turkoman tribes; (2) the somewhat more elaborate "head-and-shoulders" shaped *mihrab* of the Bokharans; (3) the plain, broad, pointed arch occasionally found in certain prayer rugs made by Ersari Turkomans at Beshir—this is not true to type, but appears to be a hybrid between the Turkoman and Bokharan types, much as are many of the other rug designs of this district; (4) the rectangular *mihrab*, often deeper than it is broad, of the South-Western Afghan group.

Plate A, illustrating the true Bokhara prayer rug, shows a rug of about 150 years of age, and, as will be seen, it is not one that would be classified as a "Bokhara" either by the general public or by dealers, rather it would probably be called a "Beshir." It is, nevertheless, typical of the best produce of Bokhara.



The "head-and-shoulders" shape of the *mihrab* of this rug is characteristic and is essentially different from the tent-shaped niche of the Turkomans. The shape of the rug is somewhat long and narrow compared with the shorter and broader prayer rugs of the Turkomans, from which it also differs entirely in its general design and colouring.

This rug has a central panel of old rose, extending up into the *mihrab*, outlined by a border of turquoise blue, lying upon a field of ivory which again is bounded by turquoise blue. The abruptness of the transition from bright colour to ivory is most skilfully softened by a curious kind of feathering in the design which gives a most pleasing effect.

Throughout the whole body of the rug are beautifully designed but stiff and rectilinear floral forms, somewhat large in size and in bold variety of colour—green, blue, brown, and red—arranged symmetrically in vertical rows.

Plate B shows a prayer rug of the Saryk Turkomans from the Punjeh district. It is one of the oldest and finest examples of its type still in existence, being probably more than 250 years old and in excellent preservation, except for the portion at the lower end, which has been replaced with a rough old piece of Turkoman webbing to complete its appearance and to prevent further wear.

It is what is usually, but erroneously, called a "Bokhara" prayer rug, sometimes more particularly, and more fatuously, a "Princess Bokhara." In reality it is the purest type of nomad Turkoman prayer rug.

The Yomuts, Tekkes, Salors and Saryks, all weave prayer rugs of this general type with differences only in regard to minor tribal designs and colour-schemes.



As is so often the case with the best prayer rugs, this specimen is made with the finest "pāshm" or undergrowth of wool, which makes it delightfully soft to the touch, and in part accounts for the wonderful way it has lasted through the ages.

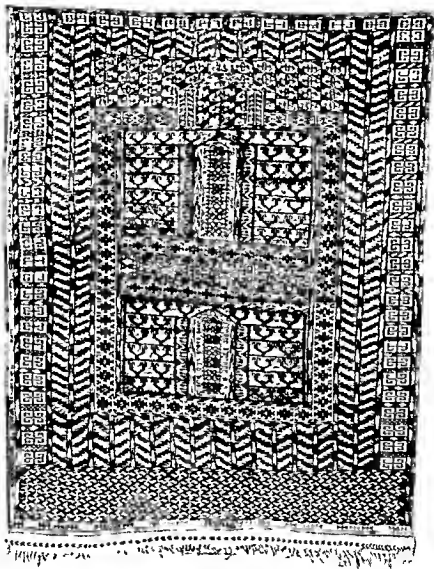
The colouring is the richest of deep rose in predominance, with minor quantities of dark blue, brown, ivory and salmon pink, together with a deep skirt of peculiar bronze.

An invariable characteristic of these Turkoman prayer rugs is the division of the inner field by broad vertical and horizontal cross-bands, though in this particular specimen the inner field is so comparatively small that it is not so markedly quartered by the cross-bands as is often the case.

In consequence of these bands forming a kind of cross, these rugs have come to be known by Armenians as "khatchli," or cross-pattern; but, of course, nothing was further from the thoughts of the strict Sunni Mohammedan weavers than any representation in their prayer rugs of a cross with its Christian symbolism.

A feature to note is the series of *mīhrabs* placed in a separate panel at the top of the field. They are small in proportion to the size of the rug, and are tent-shaped, thus differing entirely from the *mīhrab* of the Bokhariōt. These *mīhrabs* are sometimes single, but are frequently as many as three, five, seven, or even nine in a row (as in the illustration).

The composition of the field and borders of this rug is most interesting, and well worth analysis. There is first the main outer bordering, consisting, on the top and at each side, of a common Turkoman geometric design with outer and inner guard stripes of the double saw-tooth pattern. The broad bottom border



AKHAI TFAKI PRAYEE RUG

is in a peculiar shade of bronze, as is usual in these rugs, and contains a series of conventionalised Trees of Life in old rose, with alternate branches in salmon pink, the drooping ends of these branches terminating in what resemble pendent lamps.

Some form of the Tree of Life, often so stiff and conventionalised as to be hardly recognisable, occurs in practically every Turkoman prayer rug, usually in the main border of the field.

Within the outer bordering, on a deep old-rose ground, is the main field, within which is an inner field, which in turn contains the Holy of Holies in the shape of the cross-panels before mentioned. The design of the main field consists of double bands at the top, bottom, and each side.

The topmost band contains the nine tent-shaped *mihrabs*, and beneath this is a band of beautiful plum-colour, on which is a row of the tops of Trees of Life.

Each outer side design of the main field is a stalwart Tree of Life in deep blue, similar to those in the broad bottom border, and each inner side design is a stiff "vine" formation. The lower band is one of rectangular figures containing double rows of curious brackets, and beneath this is another band of tree-tops.

The inner field is bounded by a border formed by a series of devices like "jews' harps," and on it appears again the curious double-bracket device similar to, but larger than, those in the lower band of the main field. This bracket device corresponds to, and has the same significance as, the commoner Y-shaped design of the Tekke Turkoman prayer rugs. The central horizontal panel is decorated with trefoil forms in groups of four with crossed stems. The central vertical column is divided into two

similar portions above and below the horizontal band. Each portion contains a Tree of Life on a rich plum-coloured ground, and each is defined by a border containing the well-known "S" device of religious significance, and culminating in a pointed arch, which is a subsidiary *mihrab*.

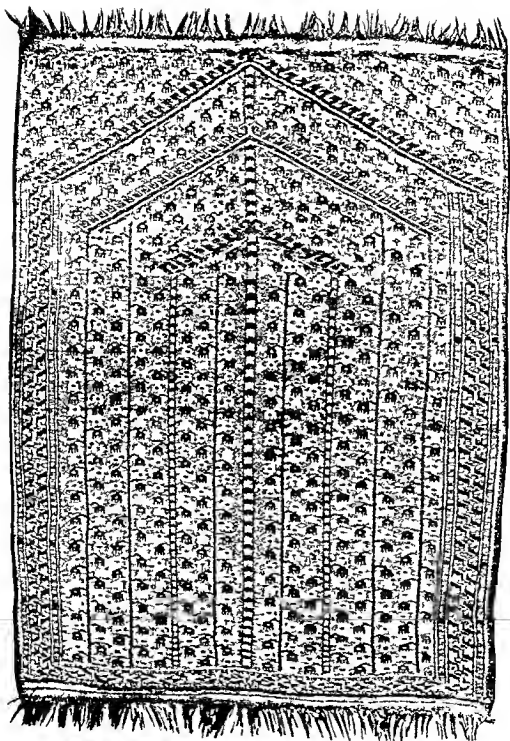
This particular rug is woven throughout in the Turkish knot instead of the more usual Persian knot. This is rarely found except in the finest grades of really antique prayer rugs, though sometimes the first few knots at each side of each row of knots are of the Turkish variety, the main body of the rug being in the Persian knot.

Such is the typical Punjdeh or Saryk Turkoman design of prayer rug, and is without doubt the most beautiful of the prayer rugs of the Turkomans. Modern ones may be had in plenty. Incidentally, they may be had in a variety of colours differing totally, after the gentle influence of "washing" and chemicals, from the colours their makers gave them. Good ones "of a certain age," perhaps up to 100 years, may be had in limited numbers. The genuine antique, the real thing, is almost as scarce as the dodo—*rara avis*. *Beati possidentes*.

The first half-tone illustration is of a prayer rug of the Akhal Tekkes. As will be seen, the main scheme of this rug is similar to that of the Saryk Turkoman prayer rug illustrated in colour. In fact, all the prayer rugs of the so-called "Punjdeh" group (Salors, Saryks, and Tekkes), as well as those of the Yomuts, are based on this same scheme.

Noticeable differences of minor design are the single *mihrab* and the Y-shaped design, instead of the bracket, on the inner field.

The outer geometric border is one which is common to



PRARI TUKOMAN TRAVEL BAG IKOMAKI WOVEN IN THE BEJIR DISTRICT

practically all Turkoman prayer rugs of this type; its guard stripes are here the barber's pole instead of the double saw-tooth. The main border is a conventionalised Tree of Life of a formation like that of a pine tree. The borders of the inner field and of the horizontal crossband are the diamond formation in steps which is common both in Tekke and in Yomut fabrics. The panels of the crossbands contain conventionalised crosses, whilst along either side of each vertical panel may be seen borders of what look like combs, and also the little dentured guard stripe which is more commonly associated with Salor rugs.

The upper band of the field into which projects the *mihrab*, is of the pattern of small quartered diamonds popular in Yomut rugs and also very common in these prayer rugs of the more western Tekkes; similarly the broad bottom-band is of a small diamond formation of decided Yomut influence which is frequently the decoration chosen by the western Tekkes for these bottom bands.

The second half-tone illustration is of a prayer rug woven by a section of the Ersari Turkoman tribe, probably in the neighbourhood of Beshir. It is not a true type, but rather a fantasy. The weaver has contrived to combine the peculiarities of many tribes, and has obtained a result that would be hard to classify did it not bear that somewhat indefinable, but none the less unmistakable, stamp of those branches of the Ersari tribe who have for long been faithless to true Turkoman tradition in their weaves.

The three *mihrabs*, one within the other, are of the type often found in Bokhara rugs, except that in the latter the outer *mihrab* has usually a kind of "head" at the apex of the "shoulders." If a line were drawn across the centre of this rug the shape of the

*mihrahs* would then be somewhat of the tent shape favoured by the Turkomans.

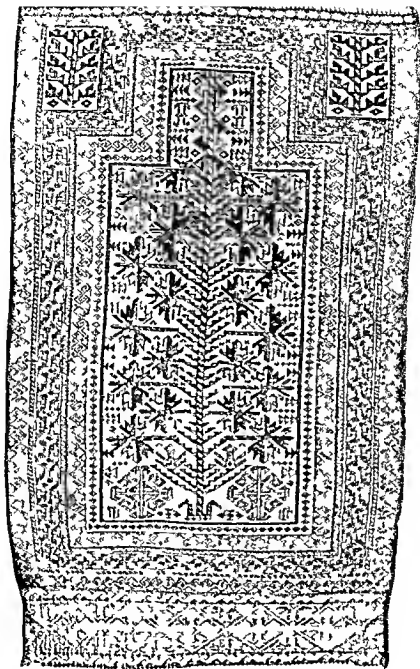
The shoulders of the arches are decorated with a running-latch-hook design. The field throughout is covered with an all-over repetitive design, in alternate light and dark shades; this design is the one resembling pendent lamps, which is perhaps most common in the rugs of the so-called "Punjdeh" group (*i.e.* the Salors, Saryks, and Merv Tekkes). In the lower two-thirds of the field they are combined on stems to form conventionalised Trees of Life.

The main side borders are of a type, probably of Caucasian origin, which is also sometimes found in the rugs here considered in one main group as South-Western Afghans.

The third half-tone illustration is of a prayer rug of the South-Western Afghan group, possibly woven as far south as Beluchistan.

This rug is not Turkoman, nor is it one of any great merit, but it is illustrated merely as a specimen of a type which is sometimes erroneously called Turkomani. As a rule these rugs are of sombre colouring, dull reds and dark blues, inclining to a purplish tone; but sometimes, as in the illustration, the monotonous, sombre colouring is abandoned in the field for a plain fawn colour, on which is depicted a rather elaborate Tree of Life of geometric design instead of the more usual pattern of a small repetitive leaf formation.

The *mihrab* is here uncompromisingly rectangular, somewhat deeper than it is broad. In the spaces on each side of the *mihrab* are small exterior panels, themselves containing Trees of Life, of somewhat different formation to that of the main



PRAYER RUG OF THE SOUTH WESTERN AFGHANI TYPE. FOUND IN KANDAHAR  
 AND AS FAR SOUTH AS BAFLOO, AFGHANISTAN.



field. These small panels are probably to indicate the position of the devotee's hands as kneeling he bows his forehead on to the *mihrab*.

The main border, following the outline of the field, is common enough in these rugs, and is also found in certain Turkomans, (*vide* previous illustration of Ersari prayer rug). The subsidiary borders are of a curious double running latch-hook. The finish of the ends of this rug is that associated with the rugs of Beluchistan, the broad web end decorated in unpiled flat woven stitch and terminating in several rows of knots and a fringe.

## TWO SOUTHERN PERSIAN RUGS<sup>1</sup>

**T**HERE is much to be learnt by way of comparison by concluding with a description of two unique specimens from South Persia of the rug-weaver's art of bygone ages. They hail respectively from Shiraz and Niris, both in the province of Fars, and are rare examples of the craftsmanship which attained its highest excellence in those places during the 16th and 17th centuries.

There are but few of these rugs of Southern Persia still in existence which can correctly be attributed to the 16th, or even to the 17th, century.

For the brilliance and softness of their luxurious wool they were unsurpassed, and it is that very softness of the material of the antiques, combined with a certain looseness in the manner of their weave, which has caused them to become so rare, since they were the more easily worn out.

Although Shiraz and Niris are only some fifty miles apart, there are essential differences in the weave and finish of their fabrics. For example, the Shiraz rugs have close-clipped pile, whereas those from Niris have the pile left deep and thick. The Shirazi wove in the Sehna, or Persian knot, while the weaver of Niris used the Ghiordes, or Turkish knot.

<sup>1</sup> The colour-plates of these two rugs being available, their description is included here for the sake of general interest and to serve as a contrast between Persian and Turkoman rugs. These rugs are, of course, entirely outside the Central Asian group.

Many of their designs, however, both of field and border, showed kinship, as also did the finish of the ends and sides. Certainly they vied with one another in the superb quality of their wool and dyes.

Our plate shows first a little masterpiece from Shiraz, dating from about the time of King Shah Abbas (late 16th and early 17th centuries), and is typical of all that was finest in the rugs of that period as regards weave, design, colouring, and material.

On a field of wonderful old Southern Persian blue is a polychrome repetitive design of large cones, between each of which is a representation of the Tree of Life.

The cones are in red, green, saffron, and ivory, and no two of them are the same in the colour-schemes of their minor details.

The cones are arranged in rows horizontally, and, as is usual in Shiraz rugs, each row faces the opposite way to the rows above and below it. The distribution of these cones so that they shall not also form rows vertically or diagonally saves the rug from too great severity of design. Near the base of each cone is a figure somewhat resembling a bat with outspread wings. This is an elaboration of the well-known Shah Abbas design.

In the centre of each cone is a small panel, undoubtedly representing a mosque door, through which can be seen what is probably a pendent mosque lamp, or perhaps some form of altar. Completely surrounding each mosque door are serried ranks of little figures, in which, without unduly straining the imagination, one can see either a bird's-eye view of the crowd of devout worshippers themselves, or at any rate the mosaic courtyard of the mosque.

Outside this, again, there are somewhat stiff floral and foliate forms to represent the surrounding garden, and the hook of each cone contains a tree-form.

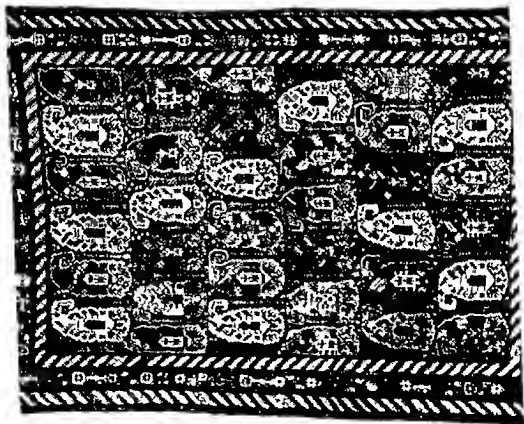
Thus each separate cone contains the royal Shah Abbas device and representation of a mosque and garden, and so, in view too of the excellent preservation of the rug, it is safe to conclude that this beautiful piece was specially made for, and preserved throughout many ages in, a mosque or a palace.

The main motives of the field design, *i.e.* the cone and the Tree of Life, are both of religious significance. The origin of the former is obscure, and many different meanings have been assigned to it; but it is more than likely that its true significance is the symbolisation of the flames worshipped by those of the Zoroastrian faith. The Tree of Life represents to the good Moslem that tree in Paradise beneath whose branches he will enjoy everlasting peace and the society of fair houris, and to him it is symbolic of immortality. The borders are in consonance with the colour-scheme of the field, and are of such balance and proportion as to lend perfect harmony to the whole.

The centre border, in red, flanked on either side by a border of alternate ivory and dark blue diagonal stripes, contains small octagonal medallions, in which are eight-pointed stars. Each of these is connected up to the next by four small cone-shapes placed back to back and base to base.

The eight-pointed star is another device attributed to several different origins, but it is undoubtedly of religious significance, since it represented their deity both to the ancient Medes and to the Chaldeans.

In this rug the richness of the deep blues and ruby reds is



typical of the high standard of excellence to which the art of dye-making was brought during the 16th and 17th centuries. The judicious interspersion of lighter colours and ivory heightens the charm and brightens the effect of the whole.

The masterly workmanship and the variety in the details of the design, in which great latitude is given to the individuality and imagination of the artist weaver, are a source of unending speculative delight. The texture is exceedingly fine for a Shiraz, though there is the usual tendency to looseness of weave.

The second plate illustrates a strikingly beautiful Niris rug of slightly later date than the Shiraz. In this rug a comparatively small field is surrounded by a deep margin of many border stripes, which is a typical feature of these rugs. The borders are beautifully balanced and proportioned, and give great scope to the weaver's skill and imagination.

The ground of the field is that deep dark blue, almost translucent, for which South Persia was famous. This throws up in a wonderful fashion the repetitive design of flowers on stems, which are arranged in parallel diagonal lines all over the field. These lines of flowers are in alternating colours—rich red, bright blue, and rose. Each flower-form is thrown into relief by an edging picked out in some other colour.

The colouring throughout is exquisite. Its rich depths, mellowed by time, are those of some rare old stained-glass windows. Add to this a sheen, comparable only with that seen on the wings of some gorgeous tropical butterfly, and the effect is one which must have transcended the wildest dreams of the artist who wove it nearly two hundred and fifty years ago.

It is regrettable that the best of coloured plates cannot begin

to reproduce this effect, still less to give an idea of the infinite variety of colour-tones which changing lights bring into play.

The luxurious depth of the firm pile lures one to commit the sacrilege of treading it underfoot.

These two beautiful rugs, quite apart from their great intrinsic merits of material, design, and workmanship, are perfect gems to delight the eye of the colourist, and enigmas to intrigue for ever.

# INDEX.

ABBASSID dynasty, 30  
 Abdals, 33, 97  
 Abdul Ghazi Bahadur Khan,  
 Abul Khair Khan, 70  
 Adraskand, 34, 105  
 — carpet, 106-107  
 Afghan group, 65, 104  
 "Afghan" rugs, so-called, 10.  
 Afghan Turkomans, 33, 34, 1  
 — Turkoman *guz*, 64  
 Age and condition of rugs, 4  
 Akhal Tekkes, 33, 92  
 — Tekke prayer rug, 118-119  
 Alielis, 34, 83, 96  
 Amu Darya, *see* Oxus river.  
 Anaoulis, 35  
 Andkhui, 34, 83  
 Animal designs, 62, 75, 101  
 Arab origin, tribes of, 35, 112  
 Ashtar Khanides dynasty, 70  
 Ashkhabad, 33, 93  
 Assyrians, 46  
 Astarabad, 97  
 Atas, 35  
 Atrak river, 97  
  
 Babylonians, 46  
 Balkh, 34, 78, 82, 83, map  
 Band i-Turkestan, 82, map  
 Barber's pole design, 101, 119  
 Bedynes, 30  
 Beluchistan, 65, 104, 120  
 Beshir, 34, 79, 80, 81, 119, map  
 "Beshir" rugs, so called, 74, 79  
 Bokhara, 68-70, 93, map  
 — carpets, 73-75  
 — City, 71-72  
 — design, 64

Bokhara literature, 71-72  
 — prayer rug, 114-115  
 "Bokhara" rugs, so called, 66, 115  
 Bourdahik, 34, 79, map  
 Bustard, 64, 95  
  
 "Camel" caravans, 84  
 "Camel foot" rugs, so-called, 90  
 Caucasian influences, 30, 99, 121, 120  
 Central Asian Railway, 93, map  
 Chakir, 34, 79, 80, map  
 Characteristics of Turkoman rugs, 5  
 Charju, 34, 78, 93, map  
 Charshangu, 34, 84, map  
 Chaudor design, 64, 102  
 — Turkomans, 33, 97, 123  
 Cheleken Island, 97, map  
 Chiks, 35  
 "Cockling" of a rug, 84  
 Colouring, 36-37, 74  
 Comb, 61  
 Cone design, 60, 123, 124  
 Connolly, 68  
 Cotton, 54, 57, 69  
  
 Dalis, 34  
 Darius Hystaspes, 30  
 "Daur-i Khirgah," 108, 112  
 Deh nao, 112, map  
 Design, 40-41, 56, 58, 59  
 Designs, Field, 62-65  
 —, Turkoman, 60-65  
 Dog design, 60, 81, 89, 101  
 Door surround, 108, 112  
 Double saw tooth, 119  
 — overcasting, 53, 57  
 — selvedge, 53



Dyes, 37-38  
—, test of, 39

Effulgent stars, 85  
Eight petalled flower, 60, 106  
"Elephant foot" rugs, 83, 90  
Ersari carpets, 79-82, 100  
— *gul*, 64  
— *joul*, 113  
— *kharyn*, 113  
— prayer rug, 119-120  
— Turkomans 34, 63, 73-79  
Evil eye, 41, 69, 90  
Examining a carpet, 43-45

Faking, 42-43  
Fars 122  
Felt carpets, 110  
Feraghan, 75  
Ferghana, 73  
"Fil pa," 81, 83, 104  
Finish of rugs, 52, 53  
"  
Geok Tepe, 93, map  
Ghiordes knot 50  
Ghuz, 87, 105  
Goat hair, 54, 56, 82, 85  
Goklan Turkomans, 34, 97, 112  
Gorghen river, 97, map  
Great Balkan mountains, 31, 97, map  
*Guls*, Turkoman 62-65

Herat, 34, 75, 92, 104, 105  
"Herati" rugs, so-called, 104  
Heri rud, 88  
Herring bone design, 91, 96  
Hybrids, 76  
—, causes of, 67

Ignes, 35  
Ikdvrs, 33, 97  
Imreli, 35  
Ismail Khan, 31, 87  
Issi Koul Lake, 30

*Ja-i nimaz*, 114  
Jenghiz Khan, 70, 71, 98, 105  
*Jowals*, 108, 110, 113, 114

"Kabul" rugs, so-called, 104  
Kalmuks, 92  
Kandahar, 34, 104  
Kara Boghaz Gulf, 97  
Karadachlis, 35  
Karakalpaks, 34, 98  
Kara Kum desert, 77, 86, map  
Kara Turkomans, 34, 83, 96  
Kark, 34, 79, map  
Kashan, 54  
Kaufman, 98  
*Kharyn*, 108, 110, 111  
"Khatchli" pattern, 103, 116  
*Khelms*, 111, 112  
Khurghiz, 34, 69, 73, 98  
Khiva, 66, 70, 87, 98, map  
"Khiva" rugs, so-called, 66, 67, 90, 99, 100  
Khodjas, 35  
Khoja Salih, 34, 80, 81, 84, map  
Khorassan, 104, map  
Khushk Post, 93, map  
Kilif, 34, 84, map  
Kini Arvat, 33, 93, 97, map  
Kini Ayak, 34, 80, 81, 84, map  
Knots, 49-52  
Kouls, 35  
Krasnovodsk, 93, 100, map

Latch hook design, 99, 101, 102, 106  
Looms, 45

Mahmud of Ghazni, 98  
Mangushlak, 34, 78, 81, 92, 97, 100, map  
Marco Polo, 47  
Maruchak, 33, 88, map  
Materials, 53-55, 56  
Mecca, 114  
Mechinlis, 35  
Merv, 87, 93, map  
— oasis, 33, 67, 86, map  
— rug group, 86  
"Merv" rugs, so-called, 67, 94  
Merv Tekles, 33  
*Mishrafi*, 114, 116, 118, 119, 120  
Mohammed Em. n Khan, 86  
Mongolian influence 74, 104  
Mordants, 38-39

# INDEX

Mourtchalis, 35  
Murghab river, 33, 77, 86, 88, map

Nadir Shah, 31, 70

Niris, 122

— rug, 125

Nomenclature, 66, 67

Nouchourls, 35

Octagonal disc, 60, 106

Ogourchinski island, 97, map

Ogourdialis, 34, 35, 97

Ogouz Khan, 30

Origin of carpet weaving, 46-47

Outlining of design, 82, 106, 125

Overcasting, 52, 53

Oxus river, 68, 77, 79, 82, 98, map

"Pashm," 54

Persian knot, 50

Pile, 49, 54, 56

Points of a rug, 36

Polygonal medallion, 75

Port Alexandrovsk, 97

Prayer rugs, 114-121

"Princess Bokhara," so-called 67, 115

Process of weaving, 48-53

Punjdeb, 33, 88, 89, map

"Punjdeb" prayer rug, so-called, 115-118

Punjdeb rug group, 86, 118, 120

"Punjdeb" rug, so-called, 89

Reciprocal trefoil, 106

"Royal Bokharas," so-called, 67, 94

Running latch hook, 106, 120, 121

Sabzwar, 34, map

"Sabzwar" rugs, so-called, 105, 106

Safawid dynasty, 31, 87

Sakar Bazaar, 79, map

Salor guard stripe, 119

— *gul*, 63, 91, 96

— Karan, 30

— Ogourdjak, 31

— rug, 90-92

— Turkomans, 33, 86, 88

Samarland, 87, 93, map

— rugs, 55, 57, 60, 74

Saracens, 47

Sarakhs, 33, 88, 92, map

Sarts, 34, 69, 98

Saryk door surround, 113

— octagon, 63, 89

— prayer rug, 115-118

— Turkoman rug, 89, 90

— Turkomans, 33, 86, 88

Seal of Solomon, 61, 85

Sehna knot, 50

Seeds, 35

Seljuk dynasty, 31, 87, 98

Selvedge, 52, 53, 57

Shah Abbas, 123

Shahbani dynasty, 70

Shiraz, 122

— rug, 123-124

Silk, use of, 54, 56, 69, 114

"Siyah-kar" rugs, so-called, 105

Skobelev, 93

Sogdiana, 69

South Western Afghan group, 65

— prayer rug, 120, 121

Stoddart, 68

Sultan Sanjar of Merv, 103

Sumbar river, 97, map

Snastika, 60

Tadjiks, 34, 69, 98

Tag Khan, 30

Tejend oasis, 33, 86, 92, map

"Tekle Bokhara," so-called, 67

Tekke octagons, 63, 95

— prayer rugs, 117, 118

— rugs, 91, 93-96

— tent band, 113

— Turkomans, 33, 86, 88, 92-5

— (Yomut influence), 63, 91

Tents, 108-110

Texture of rugs, 45

Timur (Tamerlane), 70, 87, 98, 111

Torbas, 102, 108, 112, 113, 114

Transcaspians, 76, map

Tree of Life, 61, 96, 106, 117, 111

123, 124

Trefoil, 81, 85, 95

Trellis pattern, Ersari, 80

Dyes, 37-38

—, test of, 39

Effulgent stars, 85

Eight petalled flower, 60, 106

"Elephant foot" rugs, 83, 90

Ersari carpets, 79-82, 100

— *gul*, 64

— *jowal*, 113

— *kharyn*, 113

— prayer rug, 119-120

— Turkomans, 34 63, 78-70

Evil eye, 41, 69, 90

Examining a carpet, 43-45

Faking, 42-43

Fars 122

Felt carpets, 110

Ferghan, 75

Ferghana, 73

"Fil pa," 81, 83, 104

Finish of rugs, 52, 53

"

Geok Tepe, 93, map

Ghiordes knot 50

Ghuzz, 87, 105

Goat hair, 54, 56, 82, 85

Goklan Turkomans, 34, 97, 112

Gorghen river, 97 map

Great Balkan mountains, 31, 97, map

*Guls*, Turkoman 62-65

Herat, 34, 75 92, 104, 105

"Herat" rugs, so called, 104

Heri rud, 88

Herring bone design, 91, 96

Hybrids, 76

—, causes of, 67

Ignes, 35

Ikdyrs 33 97

Imrehls, 35

Ismail Khan, 31 87

Issi Kouli Lake, 30

*Ja-i nimaz* 114

Jenghiz Khan, 70, 71, 98, 105

*Jowals*, 108, 110, 113, 114

"Kabul" rugs, so-called, 104

Kalmuks, 92

Kandahar, 34, 104

Kara Boghar Gulf, 97

Karadachlis, 35

Karakalpaks, 34, 98

Kara Kum desert, 77, 86, map

Kara Turkomans, 34, 83, 96

Karki, 34, 79, map

Kashan, 54

Kaufman, 98

*Kharyn*, 108, 110, 111

"Khatchh" pattern, 103, 116

*Khelms*, 111, 112

Khurghiz, 34, 69 73, 98

Khiva, 66, 70, 87, 98, map

"Khiva" rugs, so-called, 66, 67, 90, 99, 100

Khodjas, 35

Khoja Salih, 34, 80, 81, 84, map

Khorassan, 104, map

Khushk Post, 93, map

Kilif, 34, 84, map

Kul Arvat, 33, 93, 97, map

Kizil Ayak, 34, 80, 81, 84, map

Knois, 49-52

Kouls, 35

Krasnovodsk, 93, 100, map

Latch hook design, 99, 101, 102, 106

Looms, 48

Mahmud of Ghazni, 98

Mangshlak, 34, 78, 81, 92, 97, 100, map

Marco Polo, 47

Maruchak, 33, 88, map

Materials, 53-55, 56

Mecca, 114

Mechinlis, 35

Merv, 87, 93 map

— oasis, 33, 67, 86, map

— rug group, 86

"Merv" rugs, so-called, 67, 94

Merv Tekkes, 33

*Afikrads*, 114, 116, 118, 119, 120

Mohammed Emin Khan, 86

Mongolian influence 74, 104

Mordants, 38-39

Mourtchahis, 35  
Murghab river, 33, 77, 86, 88, map

Nadir Shah, 31, 70  
Nims, 122

— rug, 125  
Nomenclature, 66, 67  
Nouchourlis, 35

Octagonal disc, 60, 106  
Ogourchinskii island, 97, map  
Ogourdjalis, 34, 35, 97  
Ogouz Khan, 30  
Origin of carpet weaving, 46-47  
Outlining of design, 82, 106, 125  
Overcasting, 52, 53  
Oxus river, 68, 77, 79, 82, 98, map

"Pashm," 54  
Persian knot, 50  
Pile, 49, 54, 56  
Points of a rug, 36  
Polygonal medallion, 75  
Port Alexandrovsk, 97  
Prayer rugs, 114-121  
"Princess Bokhara," so-called, 67, 115  
Process of weaving, 48-53  
Punjeh, 33, 88, 89, map  
"Punjeh" prayer rug, so-called, 115-118  
Punjeh rug group, 86, 118, 120  
"Punjeh" rug, so-called, 89

Reciprocal trefoil, 106  
"Royal Bokharas" so called, 67, 94  
Running latch hook, 106, 120, 121

Sabzwar, 34, map  
"Sabzwar" rugs, so-called, 105, 106  
Safawid dynasty, 31, 87  
Sakar Bazaar, 79, map  
Salor guard stripe, 119  
— *gul*, 63, 91, 96  
— karan, 30  
— Ogourdjak, 31  
— rug, 90-92  
— Turkomans, 33, 86, 88  
Samarkand, 87, 93, map  
— rugs, 55, 57, 60, 74

Saracens, 47  
Saraks, 33, 88, 92, map  
Sarts, 34, 69, 98  
Saryk door surround, 113  
— octagon, 63, 89  
— prayer rug, 115-118  
— Turkoman rug, 89, 90  
— Turkomans, 33, 86, 88  
Seal of Solomon, 61, 85  
Senna knot, 50  
Seids, 35  
Seljuk dynasty, 31, 87, 98  
Selvedge, 52, 53, 57  
Shah Abbas, 123  
Shahbani dynasty, 70  
Shiraz, 122  
— rug, 123-124  
Silk, use of, 54, 56, 69, 114  
"Siyah kar" rugs, so-called, 105  
Skobelev, 93  
Sogdiana, 69  
South Western Afghan group, 63, 104  
— prayer rug, 120, 121  
Stoddart, 68  
Sultan Sanyar of Mera, 105  
Sumbar river, 97, map  
Swastika, 60  
Tadjiks, 34, 69, 98  
Tag Khan, 30  
Tejend oasis, 33, 86, 92, map  
"Tekke Bokhara," so-called, 67  
Tekke octagons, 63, 95  
— prayer rugs, 117, 118  
— rugs, 91, 93-96  
— tent band, 113  
— Turkomans, 33, 86, 88, 92-93  
— (Yomut influence), 63, 94, 103  
Tents, 108-110  
Texture of rugs, 45  
Timur (Tamerlane), 70, 87, 98, 105  
Tordas, 102, 108, 112, 113, 114  
Transcaspia, 76, map  
Tree of Life, 61, 96, 106, 117, 118, 119, 123, 124  
Trefoil, 81, 85, 95  
Trellis pattern, Ersan, 80

- Tule, 87  
 Turkish knot, 50  
 Turkoman ethnography, 33-35  
   — history, 29-32  
   — hospitality, 78  
   — rugs, 76  
   — tribes, 33  
 "Turkoman" rugs, so-called, 103, 120  
 Turk tribes, 35  
  
 Ust Urt plateau, 97, map  
 Urbegs, 69, 87, 98, 105  
  
 Warp, 48, 54  
 "Washed" rugs, 40, 42, 43  
 Washing of wool, 55  
  
 Web ends, 52, 57, 121  
 West (wool) 48, 49, 56  
 West-overcasting, 53  
 West selvedge, 53  
 Wool, 53, 54, 55, 56  
  
 Yomut *gul*, 63, 99-100  
   — influence on Tekke rugs, 63, 94, 103, 119  
   — *portière*, 102-104  
   — rugs, 99-102  
   — Turkomans, 33, 34, 97  
 Yulatan, 33, 88, map  
  
 Zerafshan river, 68, 71, map  
 Zurabad, 88, 92, map

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